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PHILOSOPHY

The house of Being

By George Steiner

MARTIN HEIDEGGER:

Gesamtausgabe

Frankfurt: Klostermann.

Heidegger and Wittgenstein dominate philosophy in the twentieth century. It has, for a long time, been customary to oppose the two names, to see in Heidegger's philosophy of being something like a contrary pursuit to Wittgenstein's investigations of the linguistic and psychological conditions of speech in general and of philosophical propositions in particular. This polarity looks increasingly spurious. As K. O. Apel may have been one of the first to suggest (in a seminal essay on Wittgenstein and Heidegger, published in 1965), the affinities could prove more important than the evident differences. For both Heidegger and Wittgenstein, the key question is this: is philosophy a valid enterprise in our time? If it is, what can one suppose and exemplify its means of discourse and of existence to be? In both Heidegger and Wittgenstein certain cardinal questions - about perception, about learning, about the place of the speaker in speech acts, about the status of introspection - go back explicitly to Saint Augustine. The impact of Kierkegaard's existentialism and arguments on temporality on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* has long been obvious. The impact of Kierkegaard on Wittgenstein's ethics, on his "thinking style" is becoming manifest. To Heidegger and Wittgenstein, the question of whether or not philosophy can be "taught" and what the legitimate compromises involved in such an activity might turn out to be, was perennial and fruitfully unsettling.

Principally, distance allows one to grasp to what extent both Heidegger and Wittgenstein are, in their respective ways, summations of and, very likely, epilogues to, the tradition of German speculative discourse on morals and metaphysics, on epistemology and pedagogy (though *paideia* would be the better word), which runs from Herder and Kant to the present, and which has, after Greek philosophy, been the main line of philosophic thought in the West. It is precisely his location in this context which makes of Wittgenstein's work as serious, as "transcendent" a business as was Heidegger's, and which makes both fundamentally irreducible to the intellectualizations inherent in much of Anglo-American logical positivism and "linguistic philosophy".

There is, even at a bibliographic level, no satisfactory measure of Heidegger's presence in twentieth-century philosophy, aesthetics, theology, social thought. Though indispensable, H.-M. Saas's *Heidegger-Bibliographie* (1968, 1974) and *Materialien zu Heidegger-Bibliographie 1971-71* (1975) were not exhaustive when issued and are now outdated. Current estimates put at some four and a half to five thousand the number of monographs and articles on Heidegger. He is, with Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, the thinker who has elicited the largest secondary literature in the history of philosophy. Very roughly indeed - Heidegger's purpose is a constant throughout even the most formally and contingently diverse of his writings - one can make out four main legacies and spheres of influence.

The first is that of the "history of philosophy", though Heidegger himself would repudiate this term precisely because he regards all philosophic "serious" thought to be an *Auseinandersetzung* ("confrontation with", "encounter in dialogue with") with previous systematic thought. For Heidegger, "the history of philosophy" is philosophy itself, as it has been argued, experienced, critically re-thought, in the West. The "not-Heideggerian" can, however, make a distinction. He can make out in the corpus of Heidegger's writings a major portion which addresses itself, in seemingly traditional style, to the explication, valuation, re-ordering of Western philosophy, from 1923 to 1928, Heidegger lectured on Aristotle's *Rhetoric and Logic*, on Plato's *Sophist*, on Kant's critiques, on the sources and development of phenomenology, on the Scholastics and Aquinas in particular (Heidegger's dissertation had been on Duns Scotus), and on Leibniz. In Freiburg, where he taught from 1928 to 1934, Heidegger "read" and "read on" - the German academic expression being, here, more graphic than our "taught" - Fichte, Hegel and Schelling, with particular attention to Fichte's concept of freedom and Hegel's phenomenology. He lectured on "logic as an inquiry towards language" (1934), on Kant, on Nietzsche (an extensive series of seminars, from 1936 to 1942), on Parmenides and

Heracitus. The famous courses on "An Introduction to Metaphysics" of 1935, and on "Fundamental Questions of Metaphysics" in 1935-6, are "historical" in their presentation of the issues as they have been posed and have been thought to have been posed - the distinction is, for Heidegger, deductively and cognitively essential - since antiquity. Necessarily, the result of all this is a re-valuation of stature and relations in Western philosophy.

As is well known, Heidegger ascribes to the Pre-Socratics, to Parmenides and Heracitus above all, a privileged immediacy of ontological vision. They are still in touch, as it were, with "Being", with the primal fact of the mystery and "radiant concealment" of existence - "radiant" because manifest in every phenomenon and self-declaratory far beyond the sum of individual phenomena, "concealed" because it cannot be analytically isolated or paraphrased. It is from certain Pre-Socratic fragments, such as Parmenides on the "oneness of being" or Heracitus on the essential relations between "saying" and "being", that Heidegger derives his own attempts to "think Being", to "think the essence". Plato's idealism is a fatal (though, Heidegger also inevitable) deflection from the Pre-Socratic experience. Though salutary in its concrete mundanity, its grasp of the materiality of man's place in the world, Aristotle's critique of Plato in turn led to scientism, to the conviction that the core of reality was analysable, that matter was "there to be scientifically classified and technologically harnessed". In Descartes, in utilitarian philosophies, in modern positivism, in the "geometric" bias of Husserl's phenomenological model - and here is the root of Heidegger's dissent from his master - the Aristotelian "error" is compounded. Thus, for Heidegger, the history of Western metaphysics and epistemology, like that of Western man, is "the history of the forgetting of Being". It follows that successive bodies of systematic thought must be read in the "light" - this trope of Apollonian radiance being quite literal to Heidegger - of their nearness to or distance from the one and supreme question of all serious thought: Leibniz's "Pourquoi il y a plutôt quelque chose que rien?", which Heidegger rephrased as: "What is the Being (*das Sein*) which renders possible all *das* (*das Seiende*)?"

It is too early to tell to what extent these interpretations have altered the status of his predecessors. Will we come to recognize a shared *naïveté* in respect of the mind-body disjunction in Plato, Descartes and Kant? Will Heidegger's insistence on the existential primacy of "time" over "space" radically diminish the authority and coherence of such space-oriented epistemologies as we find them in Aristotelian notions of "extension", in Cartesian geometries and the "categories" of Kant? How useful is Heidegger's exposition of the "ecstatic nihilism" which leads Nietzsche to pass beyond idealism and beyond anthropomorphic mastery over the world - the "Will to Power" - into the dead end of negation? The current return to the Pre-Socratics in philosophical commentary and the history of philosophy is, on the Continent, as well as in America, openly Heideggerian. Increasingly, the study of Kant, Schelling, Fichte is being conducted in Heideggerian or strongly anti-Heideggerian terms. Only one thing can be said with confidence: in their sheer volume, in their exigent intensity, Heidegger's readings of Western philosophers from Anaxagoras to Husserl and French existentialism - the *Letter on Humanism* of 1946 remains the unmet challenge to Sartre and to the nascent structuralist movements - constitute an inexhaustibly instructive example of unassuming action. No other philosopher has "read philosophy" as productively as has Heidegger, a reading to which Karl Jasper's *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, 1978, provides a fascinating echo.

Art is important to Heidegger from the outset. Certain stylistic features in *Sein und Zeit* very probably reflect contemporary Expressionism. But it is in his later writings, notably during the 1950s and 60s, when seeking to elucidate the ontological presence of "things" and when arguing radical distinctions between an existential and a technical "at-homeness in the world", that Heidegger turns to plastic and graphic arts, and to Van Gogh above all. His elucidation of why/how it should be that Van Gogh's presentation of a pair of worn boots should be real far beyond any "scientific" description of such boots, of how/why it is that no technical prescription for the manufacture of the said boots produces knowledge and experience of their reality compossible to that in the

painting, of how/why Van Gogh communicates to us the "felt life" of the wearing of the boots as it had communicated itself to the farmer who trod the earth with them - this commentary, which deliberately turns Platonism on its head, alone would ensure the place of Heidegger's thought in the very short list of first-order contributions to our understanding of art. Here Gerard Manley Hopkins's intuitions of the "epiphany in things", of their vital quiddity, has found its philosophical realization.

Heidegger's contributions to "poetics" are of the same force and tenor. It is certain poetic texts - in Sophocles, in Hölderlin, in Rilke, in Trakl - which retain and "body forth" the original presence and pressures of Being. It is in very great poetry that each and every one of us can experience the precedence of the *Logos* over human usage and over "logic". *Die Sprache spricht*, "language speaks" through the poet far more than it "is spoken" by him. This makes of the poet, in Heidegger's magnificent expression, the "shepherd of Being". To "enter" a great poem, to be "entered by it", is to return from the alienations and mendacities of our only technical lives into "the house of Being". No metaphysics has ever honoured the poet quite as does Heidegger's. (The English-language reader will find useful approaches to Heidegger's poetics in the collection *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 1971, and in the special issue on Heidegger and literature of *Boundary 2*, IV, 1976). Heidegger's "ways towards reading" have been massively influential. The "deconstructionism" of Derrida and of the American "post-structuralists" can best be understood as attempts, either mimetic or polemic, to apply Heidegger's hermeneutics. What is more important, certain great poets have responded to Heidegger, often in adopting his own terms. This is strikingly true of Paul Celan - whose precise personal, spiritual relations to Heidegger remain one of the enigmatic nodes in modern literary-philosophical history - and of René Char.

The third domain in which Heidegger's impact is being felt increasingly is that of social thought or, more awkwardly but precisely, of "philosophic anthropology". The ontology of *Sein und Zeit* is that of "man's being-in-the-world", of his radical immanence and even, if we give

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back to this word its eminent and Pascalian sense, of his "mundanity". The primary concepts of "being" and of "temporality" can be understood only in terms of man's full existential relation to his world. This relation is not neutral registration of the data of consciousness as it can be argued to be in Descartes, in Kant, in Husserl. It is a relation of active, constant involvement with others, of the necessary projection of the self into the "otherness" of surrounding humanity. It is a profoundly affective relation to which Heidegger assigned the new famous name of *Sorge* or "caring care". At the same time - and here is Heidegger's characteristic dialectical motion of argument - this *Sorge* must bring the individual "house of Being", of authentic self-realization and self-harvesting. If "mundanity" becomes an end in itself, if we yield the quick of our spirit into the keeping of materialist "socialite", merely professional, forces, we shall literally lapse from the integral self. The authentic "I" will, in Heidegger's analysis, become the mass-consumption "one". Hence, the enormously influential Heideggerian treatment of the problem of personal authenticity in death, of the difficulties and deterrent illusions which modern society puts in the way of "lying on one's death", of that most integral of home-comings.

This "existentialism of personal authenticity" directly entails those ecological concerns which have now become commonplace. They were nothing of the kind when Heidegger published his *summa* more than half a century ago. Heidegger's person and style are "of the earth earthy" or, if one wants to be exact and to suggest the ubiquitous "forest" imagery in his thought, "of the forest sylvan". Long before Western sensibility evoked to the material and psychological menace posed by the technological ruin of the environment, Heidegger warned of catastrophe. For Heidegger, he that desecrates farmland, he that pulps forests, chains the life-force of flowing water behind dams and generators, is doing more than make of this haunted planet a garbage-tip. He is, again most literally, cutting man off from "the gods", that is to say, from the hosts who have, for reasons unfathomable to us, given us being instead of non-being. He is, in short, acting as would a guest who, on entering his host's lodging, begins fouling it and laying it waste. Such may have been the strength of Heidegger's alarm, such (at the time) its isolation, that it became one of the main motives for his *inextinguishable*, albeit very brief, entry into Nazism. After the war, Heidegger's *Sorge* over the technological cannibalization of the earth becomes even more anguished. He will see in the exploitative, scientific-technological values of both the United States and the Soviet Union an identical threat to the ever more precarious survival of the natural environment and of those quintessential occasions of solitude of exposure to the pulse of Being, which only this environment offers. If there is a metaphysics of the ecological movement, it is Heidegger's. (The English-language reader will find some of the key texts in *The Question Concerning Technology*, 1977).

To judge by the bibliographies, it is in theology and theological aesthetics that Heidegger's influence really began. Both H. G. Gadamer and Rudolf Bultmann have given detailed witness as to Heidegger's impact on Marburg theologians as early as his first interventions in colloquia and seminars in 1923. Heidegger's own express position is sharply "anti-theological". What he calls and condemns as "onto-theological" is the deep strain of Platonic idealism and transcendental epistemology in the whole of Christianity. It is this strain which "abstracts" God, which merely translates "spurious" metaphysical notions of the "absolute", of "eternal truth", of "timelessness and spatial infinity", into the categorically ungraspable, inaccessible "Deity".



Heidegger in 1914

(Heidegger does Christianity the honour of assuming that it is monotheistic, a point on which other thinkers have their more or less polite doubts). Thus post-Platonic, post-Cartesian "onto-theology" removes God from any structural relation to the world, removes Him from temporality, and makes of Christianity, and most especially of enlightened Protestantism, just another metaphysical system. The force of Heidegger's challenge proved fruitful. As Fr. William J. Richardson shows in his invaluable *Heidegger Through Phenomenology to Thought* (1963), current schools of "Christian existentialism", current attempts to "relocate God in existence", in both Catholic and Protestant circles, are visibly marked by the Heideggerian impulse. The same is true of the more limited field of hermeneutics. One need only glance at a gathering such as the Festschrift for Bultmann, *Zeit und Geschichte* (1964), to see that Heideggerian speculations on language, on the epiphany of Being in and through speech acts, that Heideggerian tactics of "thinking after the text" (*nach-denken*), have penetrated to even the technical-grammatical treatments of Scripture. Heidegger's presence, first at Marburg, then at Freiburg, mark a chapter in the long, often curious, history of Western uses of the Word, and Word of God. The "negative" continuity from Saint Augustine and Kierkegaard is evident.

Heidegger himself would deprecate any division of his work into distinct rubrics. For him, all thought which can be termed philosophical is an attempt "to think Being", to clarify the relations between essences as individual phenomena and the principle of essence. A passage in Coleridge may be the most succinct summation we have of Heidegger's monolithic pursuit: "Hast thou ever raised thy mind to the considerations of EXISTENCE, in and by itself, as the mere act of existing? Hast thou ever said to thyself, thoughtfully, 'I am, needless, in that moment, whether I were a man before thee, or a flower, or a grain of sand?' Heidegger did little else but ask this question while giving heed to man, to flower and forest, to star and sand." (Coleridge, in *Heidegger*, p. 10). Heidegger's writings have been difficult to grasp because of the simple fact that the great majority of his texts were unpublished during his long lifetime - and here, also, is a vital parallel to Wittgenstein.

At the time of Heidegger's death, in 1976, only a relatively limited portion of his *opera omnia* had appeared in print. His studies of Fichte, and Schelling, his teachings on the concept of negation in Hegel, the treatise he composed in 1924 on temporality, the 1941 work on "the beginning" (*Ueber den Anfang*), the *Pathologies* (1944), the

course on Leibniz and logic of 1928 - in Heidegger's ontology of essences - the "history of Being" (*Die Geschichte des Seins*, 1939), the analyses of nihilism which were set down in 1946-48 - these and much else were available only in typewritten, fragmentary seminar-notes or not at all. There were complicated reasons for this situation. Heidegger seems to have felt that the incompleteness of *Sein und Zeit*, voluminous as it is - the book remains perhaps the most famous torso in the history of philosophy - could entail a false or inadequate context for the understanding of subsequent ideas. The war years and the period of personal ostracism which followed may well have inhibited publication. But just as in the case of Wittgenstein, so there is in that of Heidegger, a strategy of "negative historicity", a cultivation of withdrawal into silence and the esoteric. Unpublished, many of Heidegger's manuscripts have exercised a peculiar spell on the philosophical community. Heidegger was a master of patience.

But whatever may have been the causes, this situation makes of a complete edition an absolute necessity. Heidegger's strengths and weaknesses, the genesis of his singular modes of discourse, the unavoidable problem of his politics - when he re-edited, for a 1953 edition, his *Introduction to Metaphysics* of 1935, he did not, and in my view most properly, alter or erase a sentence on the inherent "truth and greatness" of the National Socialist movement and early ideal - cannot be judged, indeed experienced, responsibly until the *Gesamtausgabe* is to hand. It would, therefore, be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the projected *Gesamtausgabe* in fifty-seven volumes which is now in progress.

The volumes so far published are identical, in their discreet grey binding, somewhat squat format and soberly spaced typography, with all the separate Heidegger texts issued previously by the same publisher, Klostermann of Frankfurt. A first batch has come under the general heading *Abteilung II* which is to comprise all the available written versions of the lectures delivered by Heidegger between 1923 and 1944. We have here the 1923 *Vorlesungen zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, the lectures on logic and truth of 1925-26; *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, a crucial set of lectures from the summer term of 1927; the "Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason", which dates from the following winter; *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, summer term of 1928; the 1930-31 exposition of Hegel's *Phänomenologie*; the 1931 lectures on Aristotle's metaphysics; the lectures on two hymns by Hölderlin, "Germanien" and "Der Rhein", which Heidegger gave in 1934-35; and a double volume which includes the course on the origins of Western thought and on the original to Heraclitus doctrine of the Logos, both of which date from 1943-44. When completed, the *Gesamtausgabe* is to have four sections. The first, of which four volumes are now in hand, will present all of Heidegger's published writings from 1914 to 1970; as mentioned above, the second will print all sets of lectures; *Abteilung III* will consist of hitherto unpublished material, 1919-67; and of editorial notes and sketches; and of editorial matter. According to present plans, these two latter sections will comprise one or two volumes. The previously published works will take up some sixteen volumes, the lectures roughly forty.

The Reinhard Lauth edition of Fichte's complete works, correspondence, conversations, is strictly incomparable. It has set standards of exhaustiveness, of textual scholarship, of editorial context beyond those of any other complete edition of a major philosopher. The Hegel edition, now in labouring progress, is of a markedly more modest but still impressive standard. If there is some have set for the Heidegger *opera omnia*, must be very low indeed. The editorial Nachwort appended to each volume is so good as to be of almost no use. Sometimes we are told that the printed text reproduces the genuine *Wortlaut* of the lectures.

ie, that it is a verbatim transcription. At other times, it is affirmed that the text is based on Heidegger's manuscript plus a stenographic report by this or that auditor (shades of Coleridge and of Wittgenstein). In one or two cases, the editorial note cites a manuscript prepared by a member of Heidegger's family under the master's supervision. The vexed problem of the precise relations between these various lectures and previously published monographs, such as the ones on Hölderlin or Kant, is touched on summarily if at all. Till now, the volumes have been published in no discernible order. The phenomenological interpretation of Kant is Volume 25, the commentary on Hölderlin is Volume 39. There are no indexes and footnotes appear to be limited wholly to those provided by Heidegger himself.

Now it may be that some of these drastic defects will be remedied by the promised volume of *Hinweise*, it may be that a general index, a more ample textual recension and a collation between published and unpublished writings will be forthcoming. If so, these several aids will have to be massive and will have to marshal the kind of scholarship, of pedantic scruple and editorial authority almost entirely lacking so far. This is not to deny, for a moment the imaginative boldness, the economic courage, the sheer largesse of spirit which animate the Klostermann ventures. There is something breathtaking about the launching of this Leviathan by a commercial house in the present-day climate of publishing. But it is, of course, just because the job is so magnificently worth doing, that it ought to be done definitively. Moreover, in the case of a thinker as intricate as Heidegger, as politically vulnerable, as hidden in so many vital moments of his development, textual problems demand the most stringent handling. Simply consider the "philological" quotations which must surround lengthy pronouncements on Nietzsche's aphorism (?) in the early 1940s!

Nevertheless, and even in this imperfect presentation, the material now being published is of compelling interest. It provokes vulgar awe as to



Heidegger in later life

Heidegger's fantastic industry, as to the sheer range and expository powers of a teacher whose lecture-courses in successive university terms run to many hundreds of printed pages and treat the whole compass of Western philosophy with both lyric breadth and technicality. In these nine volumes, a number of major points are made salient: the great role of Leibniz throughout Heidegger's epistemology, his choice of Kant's critiques as the ground on which to hammer out much of his own doctrine of truth and on which to pursue in depth the dissent from the phenomenology of Husserl. The Hölderlin exegesis runs to very nearly three hundred pages (two poems are being considered). Much of it seems to me wrong-headed - Heidegger is a true reader of Sophocles, of Trakl, than he is of Hölderlin - but the intensity, the probing force of the exercise are methodologically fascinating.

Apart, however, from any particular considerations, these several sets of lectures do raise a general, disturbing issue. They are, almost everywhere, laid to a degree, the vocabulary, the syntax, the expository ordering, are outstandingly clear and "public". The famous Heideggerian "darkness", the at times quasi-insuperable obstacles to agreed understanding offered by portions of *Sein und Zeit*, not to speak of later

meditations of "nothingness" and the "ontic", contrast disturbingly with these hitherto unavailable yet vital works. Naturally, there is a contingent reason: these are lectures presumably meant to be understood by students. But this is a point which ought not to be overstressed: witness the obscurities of Heidegger's contributions to the Heraclitus seminar which he taught (jointly with Eugen Fink) in 1966-67, and which was published in 1970. Some more work, touching on mechanism or tactic of self-clouding, of self-dramatization through opaqueness, may have been operative when Heidegger addressed "the world" rather than the university. One is reminded of T. E. Lawrence brusquely, self-contemptuously perhaps, shedding the Arab gear he had worn to an All Souls occasion, the instant he entered the college pantry.

But like many other questions, that of Heidegger's seeming alienance between the esoteric and the lucidly didactic, can only be looked at seriously when the work as a whole is available. With luck, the Klostermann edition should be complete well before the turn of our century. Both Heidegger and Wittgenstein are approaching the necessary monumental. As the *Gesamtausgabe* is made available, as it enters philosophical debate and general sensibility, Heidegger's place will define itself.

I would suppose that his ontology, with its epistemological, anthropological, aesthetic and theological implications and applications will be seen to constitute the most inclusive attempt made in Western philosophy-social discourse to arrive at completeness after God. I do not propose to enter into the extensive debate as to whether or not Heidegger's whole ontology is a "crypto-theology" in which *Sein* merely takes the place of "God". It is, I think, more useful to take Heidegger at his word. This is to see in his work an endeavour at a total but immanent "thinking through", "thinking about" the existential substance, meanings and values of human life. Heidegger's life-work may be grasped as the subtlest but also most forceful attempt yet made to "refuse transcendence" or, more exactly, to "de-mythologize transcendence" - here the great dialogue with Bultmann - by incarnating it, by substantiating it in a radiant immanence.

The future will be judge as to the success or failure of Heidegger's doctrines. But if they have failed, the implication may well be this: that given Western categories of meaning, of cognition and of utterance, no rigorously immanent, ontologically post-theological understanding of existence is possible. For a thinker to have shown this, to have shown it, as it were, against himself, would be achievement enough.

Details of the volumes of Heidegger's collected works reviewed in this article are as follows:

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- BAND 39: HÖLDERLINS HYMNEN "GERMANIEN" UND "DER RHEIN" 296pp. 1980.
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Ian McEwan is often talked about as if he was a precocious talent - as if he was, somehow, unnaturally old for his years. Actually, though, what's most distinctive about his refusal to grow up or suppress the fantasies of childhood, and it's this, I think, that has produced the impression of mutant youth. He is thirty-three after all, and he can still get his big toe in his mouth: a most disconcerting variant on writing tongue-in-cheek, especially when it's done with a cool economy of style.

Ordinary, full-size people have usually come off rather badly in his books. They loomed Brobdingnagian in the first two collections of stories ("brown tissues", old dogs, red eyes) and even in more naturalistic settings they are strikingly awful. In his first novel, *The Cement Garden*, there was one called Derek who might have blossomed into quite a "character" in some more congenial context - he's a dandy and a professional snooker player - but who's merely a cardboard adult and moral policeman in the world McEwan contrives. Derek - all Dereks - are the reality principle in disguise, the ones who woo your big sister (for instance) and interrupt your incestuous idyll.

As I closed my lips around Julie's nipple a soft shudder ran through her body, and a voice from across the room said mournfully, "Now I've seen it all."

It's also Derek, naturally, who finds what's in the cellar, and puts an end to the squalid rapture of childhood without parents.

However, his main role is to deflect the reader's "moral" responses. Who would be a Derek? Well, some would like the BBC Television Drama Head who banned a McEwan play on the eve of production (*Solid Geometry*, 1979) because of its "grotesque and bizarre sexual elements". But most wouldn't.

In other words, Ian McEwan has exactly touched the obscure nerve that registers "newness" in English fiction, and it may be a measure of the oddness of the cultural climate - it ought to be a measure of something - that this is all about regression. One of the most memorable lines from his first book of stories, *First Love, Last Rites* (which won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1975) was "I want to climb in the pram". It helped that his figures were never merely confessional, but impersonally weird. The incestuous, onanistic, transvestite, infanticide fantasies he belongs to, as Paul Bailey wrote, to "the recognizable world of private fantasy and nightmare - a world, despite our protestations to the contrary, we are all involved in". There haven't though, except at BBC Television (haunted, one imagines, by the thought of Mary Whitehouse) been many "protestations". This is, in part, a tribute to McEwan's persuasive strategies, for he has had from the beginning that instinct for protecting and presenting his own talent that does sometimes seem - as in the case of Philip Roth - to accompany obsessive nasty habits.

However, self-consciousness has threatened at times to narrow down the room for manoeuvre to the point where acrobatics - even getting your too in your mouth - become unnecessarily abstruse. His second book of stories had a mirror-reversed piece ("Reflections of a Kept Ape") about a woman writer trying to start her second book:

For two and a half years Sally Klee has grappled not with words and sentences, not with ideas, but with form; or rather, with tactics. Should she, for instance, break a single idea with brittle elegance and control.

What she produces, after long labour, is an exact reproduction of her first book, every word in its place. This kind of nightmare, fed doubtless by critical acclaim, must have made growth or development even more problematic than whose essential material was immaturity. It can't have helped, either, that his first venture away from short stories, *The Cement Garden* (short, but a novel) irresistibly reminded Anthony Thwaite and some other reviewers of another novel years before, which had a similar plot about happy families. As indeed you might expect, given the amorphous, un-individual nature of fantasy life - private fantasies are common property.

Ironically enough, it seems in have been television that provided a clue to the path he's following now - not the trouble with *Solid Geometry* (based anyway on an early short story) but the experience of writing *The Cement Garden*, a play broadcast last year. McEwan's own account of the matter is uncharacteristically explicit:

I felt I had written myself into too tight a corner; I had made deliberate use of material too restricted to allow me to write about the ideas that had interested me for some years. The Women's Movement had presented ways of looking at the world, both its present and its past, that were at once profoundly dislocating and infinite in possibility. I wanted to write a novel which would assume as its background a society classed but as a set of economic classes but as a patriarchy. The English class system, its pervasiveness, its endless subtleties, had once been a rich source for the English novel. . . . men and women have to do with each other in ways economic classes do not. Patriarchy corrupts our most intimate relationships with comic and tragic consequences. . . . But my narrators were frequently too idiosyncratic or asplastic to allow me the freedom to explore.

What emerged from these ruminations was not, immediately, a novel, but *The Cement Garden* which, despite its title, got him out of his solipsistic and self-conscious corner into the (comparatively) breezy climate of sexual politics. Its setting, in 1940, provided - just - a link back to childhood ("the war . . . was a living presence throughout my childhood. Sometimes I found it hard to believe I had not been alive in the summer of 1940") but the central figure was an ATS girl, and the structure was not dictated by private fantasy, but by the organization of the "Ultra" project for breaking German codes at Bletchley Park. An army of woman transcribed unintelligible signals, and fed them at Bletchley through proto-computers, while a central core of men, jealously guarded their "official secrets" and actually broke the code. It was a splendid microcosm of the equivocal freedoms the war offered women, and by this accident of built-in symbolism, the play could be, on the surface, entirely naturalistic.

This might sound like another writer altogether, but it was the "old" one (acrobatics again) turned inside out: ATS Cathy as big sister; her useless lover, a member of the Ultra inner circle who finds her sexiness obscene and her curiosity treasonable, as an over-weathered Derek. What's missing is "I", the brother/child/lover, who obviously has trouble in the land of Dereks (and in getting on television). There may be a connection between wanting to sleep with your sister and Women's Liberation, in short, but *The Cement Garden* doesn't make it. McEwan's new novel, *The Comfort of Strangers*, does, and if I seem to be approaching it via an inordinate preambule, that's because its interest and its problems are very much to do with Ian McEwan's search for ways of "placing" private fantasy in a context of public issues. That he

should be engaged so deliberately in such a search is a symptom of a familiar contemporary dilemma - there being no automatic context, the tradition of social realism being ruinous and uninhabitable, and so on.

The Comfort of Strangers is set in Venice, a decaying labyrinth, and an appropriate place for the placeless. Mary and Colin get lost every time they leave their hotel, and their mutually apologetic wanderings isolate them neatly in their semi-detached relationship:

Alone, perhaps, they could have explored the city with pleasure. . . . But they knew each other too much as they knew themselves, and their intimacy, rather like too many suicides, was a matter of perpetual concern; together they moved slowly, clumsily, effecting lugubrious compromises. . . .

Mary has been married, has children she's left behind to go on holiday; her affair with Colin is a near-androgynous conspiracy; they don't live together, theirs is "no longer a great passion".

When they looked at each other they looked into a misted mirror. When they talked of the politics of sex, which they did sometimes, they did not talk of themselves. It was precisely this collusion that made them vulnerable and sensitive to each other, easily hurt by the rediscovery that their needs and interests were distinct. . . .

This composite "person" is a splendid comic characterization of the liberated couple; there's no "I"; Colin is described, wryly, as "a slighthouse, his baby-soft curls and so on"; Mary is not, but does strenuous Yoga and can swim a lot further; "they" fit together perfectly.

Something has to go wrong, but before that happens it goes blissfully suddenly right. They've been picked up in their wanderings by a dressed couple. One half is garrulous, Italian Robert, who regales them with his macabre family history (how his came to hate his sisters), his views on men ("My father and his father . . . were proud of the sex. . . . Now men doubt themselves, they hate themselves") and on women ("They lie to themselves. They talk of freedom, and dream of captivity"). When Robert takes them home to meet his browbeaten Canadian wife Caroline, there are at first merely embarrassed and distressed to see sado-masochism flourishing so routinely, but when they get back to their hotel, they find their own relationship has taken on a new erotic urgency. Looked away together for days, they embark on a complex and incestuous (or nearly, they're so close) sexual odyssey - a tireless celebration of intertwined lives and fantasies, so different (they're rather complacent about this) from the prison of sex they've glimpsed in Robert and Caroline. They talk endlessly, too, even about themselves, and are full of passionate curiosity.

What they don't talk about is the matter of Robert and Caroline. But gradually things about that encounter surface to consciousness - suggestions hidden from themselves and each other: Robert punching Colin in a way that wasn't playful, Caroline's whispered entreaties, and most ominously and inexplicably a grainy, much-enlarged photograph among Robert's trophies that, Mary's now convinced, was of Colin, though it can't be, they've never met before. These buried memories take them back to the nightmare couple, and back into the perverse history of sexual cruelty they were so sure they'd transcended. Their rediscovery of each other has opened up an ancient chamber of horrors, and the novel's climactic scenes, in which Robert and Caroline take their kind of pleasure, have an appropriate sense of *déjà vu* - watching a foul old dream unfold itself - which I shan't enhance by telling the story any further.

tion on the theme of spontaneity and role-playing:

Now and then a couple stopped to stare approvingly at the customers on the pooton drinking against their gigantic backcloth of sunset and reddened water. One elderly gentleman positioned his wife in the foreground and half-knelt with thin, trembling thighs, to take a picture. The drinkers at a table immediately behind the woman raised their glasses good-naturedly towards the camera. But the photographer, intent on spontaneity, straightened and, with a sweeping gesture of his free hand, tried to usher them back on the path of their unselfconscious existence.

But now his wife . . . was turning her back to the camera in order to encourage the last rays of the sun into her handbag. Her husband called to her sharply and she moved smartly back into position. The closing snap of the handbag clasp brought the young men to life. They arranged themselves in their seats, lifted their glasses once more and made broad, innocent smiles. . . .

When he does a cool, comic vignette like this so well, it's hard to see why McEwan should have problems getting out of his corner, and tempting one's sister may be a way of flirting with father, even in dreams begin responsibilities, and hideous Robert is a lot more powerful and interesting than the Dereks.

The Comfort of Strangers is not as claustrophobic as this would suggest - quite. I should before ending offer a longer quotation, a quiet "outside" scene that performs an elegant varia-

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Emblems of the emotions

By Italo Calvino

The World of Donald Evans
Text by Willy Eisenhart
174pp. New York: Harlin Quist.
\$16.95.
0 8252 9650 0

All his life Donald Evans made postage stamps. Imaginary stamps from imaginary countries, drawn in pencil or coloured ink and printed in water colours, but scrupulously faithful to everything one expects from a postage stamp, to the point of seeming, at a first glance, genuine. He would invent the name of a country, a unit of currency and a repertoire of characteristic images, then begin meticulously to fill in the little squares or rectangles (sometimes triangles) framed by a perforated white border, in whole series, each series with its own year of issue and period style, each value of its own pale shade, chosen from the range of colours normal on stamps.

There was nothing science-fictional or utopian or extravagant about it: the countries of his imaginary atlas resembled the countries which exist in reality, having merely become more familiar and manageable, wholly identified with a limited number of reassuring emblems. Evans also invented the names of capital cities and made himself a circular rubber pad for cancelling the stamps so that the resemblance to real stamps was even more convincing. Sometimes the composition would also include the envelope, with postmark, and the address written in an invented hand - the names of persons and places being likewise invented but always plausible.

A fascination with stamps always sterile in childhood, inspired by a passion both for the exotic and for the systematic. From the time he was a small boy Donald Evans, who came from New Jersey, apart from collecting stamps, began to invent new ones of his own, that is he invented a history and a geography, parallel to those of the world as recognized by others. As he grew up Evans never entirely abandoned this youthful passion, even though he kept quiet about the painting he practised while he was a student of architecture, almost as if he were ashamed of it. This was in New York at the end of the 1950s, at a time when abstract expressionism held undisputed sway. Later the advent of Pop Art convinced Evans that his early predilection for the figurative was in tune with the most up-to-date artistic

developments. The way was open to launch himself as a successful painter; but the one thing that interested him was to lead a quiet life doing what he liked best. In the 1970s he did nothing but paint stamps, about 4,000 of them, divided amongst forty-two imaginary countries; he held an exhibition once a year but spent as little time as possible in New York. He lived almost wholly in Europe, mostly in Holland, up until the fire in Amsterdam which cost him his life at the age of only thirty-one. This splendid book which has been my own introduction to Evans is proof that a circle of friends and connoisseurs has devoted a cult to his person and his work as if to the memory of a saint.

Evans's short life (1945-77) has been meticulously reconstructed and his work meticulously examined by Willy Eisenhart in an introduction to the eighty-five colour plates, which are arranged like a stamp-collector's album with the imaginary countries in alphabetical order. This collection of stamps is at the same time a collection of hens, of windmills, of ships, of chairs, of palm-trees, of butterflies and all sorts of other fauna and flora ("Fauna and Flora", indeed, is the name of a federal kingdom figuring who knows where in Evans's geography, though certainly in some northern region). Evans in fact leaves classifications - nomenclatures, catalogues, sample-books; and how better to express this serial passion than in the world of stamps? "Catalogue of the Cats" is the title he himself proposed giving to his oeuvre.

Other pages display a sheet of stamps all identical and as yet undivided, on the perforated lines. Others still display collections which attempt to reconstitute this original sheet by aligning identical stamps, but these are differentiated from one another by the black shadow of the postmark or irregularities in the edging. (Evans took particular trouble over imitating these indentations, or their absence in those series portraying machines were invented). Nor are more abstract combinations lacking, such as the dominos in the very elegant stamps of the "Etat Domino", or the Scottish tartans of "Antique", painted in honour of a girl whose family came from Scotland.

Eisenhart sees this philatelic fixation as arising from Evan's introverted character. I would say that what drove him was the need to keep a diary of

states of mind, feelings, positive experience and values, synthesized into emblematic objects; through the nostalgic vision of the stamp album these inner states are objectified, brought under the control of his conscious mind by being ordered into a system, by the ironic invention and attribution of names, and by the subtle melancholy of these pale landscapes, repeated in so many different shades.

Creating stamps was for Donald Evans above all a way of appropriating the countries he visited and the places he lived in. His adopted land of Holland was the inspiration for the stamps of "Achterdijk" (Behind the dyke, from his first Dutch address) and "Nedorp" (After the village, from the address of a friend), in which he expresses his love for the flat landscapes, the various shapes of windmill and even for the Dutch language. The stamps of "Bercentrum" - from the name of a bar Evans frequented in Amsterdam - are in brighter colours: a beautiful sequence which is also a list of drinks from the most expensive to the cheaper, all in different glasses. One slowly comes to realize that many of these names of countries are not in fact made-up ones, but designate humble or tiny places through which Evans has passed and to which he has attributed the prerogatives normally accorded to sovereign states. Thus after a summer on the Costa Brava he designed the stamps of Cadagús, a cheerful set displaying vegetable.

Other names belong to a geography of the feelings: "Licham" and "Geest" (body and soul in Dutch) are twin kingdoms of the far North with a currency in common - the "ijs", or ice - as well as stamps - showing seals and whales. Two African islands are called "Amis et Amants" and make up one of the countries to emerge from the decolonization of a former French protectorate, the "Royaume de Caluda". To begin with, these newly independent states continue to use the old stamps of the old colony, over-printed; then the "Postes des Iles Amis et Amants" issue a new set of local scenes called "Coup de Foudre", "Premières Amours" or "La Passade".

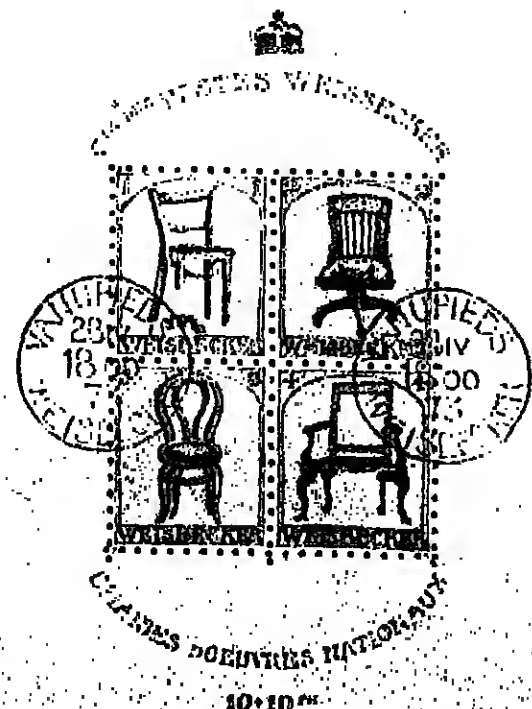
But it is above all through food that Evans establishes his relationship with countries, having absorbed during his travels their most characteristic tastes and aromas. After a trip to Italy he invents a new country, "Mangiare", whose currency is calculated in grams

and whose very graceful stamps are a museum of vegetables, fruit and herbs - from peas, capers, pine-kernels, olives (images picked out with elegant borders round them), to marrowflowers, rosemary, celery and broccoli. "Lo Stato di Mangiare" devotes a special issue to the recipe for *pesto alla genovese* with its basic ingredients (basil, pine kernels, pecorino cheese, garlic). Another series, dated 1927, exalts the cucumber to the shape of an airship. During the Second World War the Stato di Mangiare is invaded by the army of Antipasto, and the stamps of the Occupied Zone are over-printed. After the war one region of Mangiare, called Peste, achieves self-government and the "poste Peste" issue a series that is a splendid sample of varieties of peste.

Even this expatriate American's nostalgia for his home country focuses on visions of the edible on fruit. The evocative sheets devoted to a country called "My Bonnie" ("My Bonnie lies

over the ocean", as the song has it) are dotted with apparently identical cherry-trees, except each one is a different shade of red and has a different name taken from a horticultural catalogue.

In fact this supposed introvert was by no means a man turned in on himself but one who looked outwards at the objects of the world, which he selected, recognized and nominated one by one with a loving delicacy and precision. Probably the aspect of postage stamps which most interested him was their celebratory function; he wanted to substitute for the official, programmed and bureaucratic attempts at celebration of the world's postal authorities a private ritual of celebration, of the commemoration of tiny encounters, of the consecration of unique and irreplaceable things: a sprig of basil, a butterfly, an olive. Without the illusion of rescuing them from the flux of time, which rapidly transforms sets of stamps into vestiges of the past.



Donald Evans used the name of the illustrator Philippe Weisbecker for that of the imaginary country of origin of his set of stamps, "Nataland chairs. Block of four in souvenir sheet" (1973). Weisbecker had collected four chairs from the New York streets as models for this work and lent Evans his apartment. The *Chaises d'Ouvriers Nationaux*, which this set commemorates, puns with "chef d'oeuvre" and the capital of Weisbecker, "Voupiédis", which is printed in the postmark, means "Barefoot Vagabond". The currency of the country Evans named after his friend and his cat, there being one hundred Philos to one Weisbecker franc. The extra ten Philos added to the stamps' face value at the bottom reflects standard philatelic practice with special souvenir sheets. The illustration is taken from the book reviewed here.

The Portrait Game

(after Turgenev)

A florid old cherub,
the Silenus of a library -
its most benign spirit.
He comes every day,
huffing and shuffling.
You hear him round the corner,
who forgetfully he whistles
two soft wistful notes.
In love with books, he clatters
perilous toy staps
to pluck the furthest prizes,
the heaviest and arcane.
Voluminous where he's been.
Sprawled on the top
of a mahogany cabinet
(like a tomb for gift folios),
a lexicon lies open:
with his fulvous middle finger
he strokes its cleft.

I don't like the look
of this fellow.
He ought to be jolly,
but in fact he's a bully,
pettish, pampered
like a Roman emperor.
Nose as porous
as a sordid strawberry.
Lips, maroon and rubbery.
A challenging rhino's snout
to end from the table
where he drinks nine pints a night.
He tells his mates what's what,
and they laugh when he does.
Married? Never was.
Works as foreman
to a yard stacked with rusting drums -
most days by the gate,
snoozing his gums
with a clipped matchstick;
sulky, obtuse,
but quick to be sarcastic.

He's a farm-labourer,
a sturdy perfectionist.
Day after day he endures
the fug of the henhouse,
where he patiently rehearse
the complex gobbledygook
of his own New Hen Symphony.

In a gust of garlic,
Moroccan or Turkish,
the smug patron
of a Soho restaurant.
He runs it well,
with napkins as natty
as the headgear of nurses,
outlandish implements
for all our cack-handed
operations on snails.
He talks to a very table,
condescending and banal.
If you ask for champagne,
he comes himself
to ease out the mushroom,
then shoves the bottle
back into its gall
of icy rubble.
He hardly ever smiles,
but, then, exactly
how many murders
have been committed
on the mere illent say-so
of those tawny teeth?

An abject busker,
though he was once a soldier,
who, in a seep
near the Equator,
possessed a young girl
as glossy as an eubergine,
with a curious perfume
both facial and sweet.
A cap like a puddle
now lies at his feet,
to receive the odd penny.
He wheedles his harmonica -
a horrible sound.

Christopher Reid

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387pp. Sierra Club Books. \$16.95.
0 87156 233 2

Charles Neider is probably best known as Mark Twain's most industrious editor. Others might recognize him as the author of *The Authentic Death of Hendry Jones*, a novel of Old California, which Marion Brand filmed as *One-Eyed Jacks*. Among those who have praised his fiction are Saul Bellow, E. M. Forster, and Thomas Mann. Neider's oeuvre also embraces *Sissy: A Childhood*, a description of his daughter's first four years, and *The Frozen Sea*, a psychological study of Kafka. What a distance there seems between Kafka, who dreamed in his diary (January 19, 1922) of the "Infinite, deep, warm, saving happiness of sitting beside the cradle of one's child, opposite its mother", and his explication, who actually sat beside his daughter's cradle, but so as to record her every word. In a sense Neider has actually turned Kafka's self-absorption inside out.

The title *The Frozen Sea* is extracted from one of Kafka's aphorisms: "A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us". It is in

some ways a prophetic title, for *Beyond Cape Horn* is Neider's third book about Antarctica. Why the fascination? Is it that he regards the frozen seas of the south as the world's sleeping subconscious? This is how Neider explains it in the book:

I had been invited on occasion to go to the Arctic, but after Antarctica I had no desire to go north. There were more than a million indigenous human residents north of the Arctic Circle. There were none south of the Antarctic Circle and never had been. There were polar bears and foxes and other animals north of the Arctic Circle. Aside from a few bird species, the only animals south of the Antarctic Circle were in the sea, and the birds had to live off the sea or die. It was precisely the continent's extremes that drew me to it, and the fact that it was not only prehistoric, but probably pre-mammalian as well fascinated me. *Beyond Cape Horn* is no ice-breaker on the contrary, it is a plea to let sleeping dogs lie. Neider speaks up for Antarctica, arguing that its awe-inspiring terrain should be left unexplored for the good of mankind. At the moment the only inhabitants of the continent are scientists, among whom Neider was something of an anomaly, being "the only literary writer and humanist working in the Antarctic". While the scientists recorded minutiae according to their

specialties, Neider attempted to encompass the whole with his eye. Neider's eye is a precision instrument. His descriptions are not impressions, but verbal equivalents of the scintillating colour photographs that illuminate the book:

When one turned one's head one experienced a tremendous sweep of space, and within the framework of this relatively monochromatic world there was the excitement of color: the sweet blue of the zenith, the lime above the horizon, the lavender, lilac, and pink in the leebeft, the slate blues of islands and mountains. The sea ice was a very mirror. The water rushing down the hillside gleamed like a stream of mercury.

According to Neider, Kafka's K was a scopophilic - a voyeur or observer - "too cerebral to accept the irrational. Neider, likewise, is an observer, whether disguised as Doc Baker, narrator of *The Authentic Death of Hendry Jones*, or as himself, noting his daughter's development from behind a two-way mirror. At the conclusion of the scene quoted above Neider discovers that the landscape had "worked profoundly" on him, so that he "felt in love with something or someone". "Lord, Lord," I kept saying to myself, "how lucky I am to be here, and my eyes filled with tears. But why? The reader, far removed from

the place itself, feels envious and slightly cheated. It is as though Neider has been moved by a great work of art but can't get others to share his feeling. As he himself puts it after another excursion: "How to describe the joy?" Neider is a kind of Lord of Creation: he sees, he writes, and Antarctica exists. But the dazzling beauty of the prose conceals a failure, not unlike K's.

Neider is prepared to take all manner of risks to getting to know Antarctica, but its ultimate meaning remains obscure. At one point he is tempted by the "pure glasslike quality" of the water to remove his clothes and jump in, his body "seemingly aching to be immersed in this soothingly cold liquid", as if with a fever "of mysterious origin".

I wondered what would happen if I gave in to my imagination. But then I thought of the water's extraordinary temperature and of my considerable chronological age and how embarrassing it would be if I had a heart attack and became a burden to my hosts, and how much our behaviour is based on fear of being an embarrassment, and how many good people, Ernest Hemingway among them, have killed themselves rather than endure this fear.

Neider's only speculation upon his own identity produces imagery entirely at odds with Antarctica's. My name . . . neither looked nor

sounded "American" (it's pronounced Nyder, not Needer). I was foreign-born (Odessa, Russia) and although I had never been Jewish in any real sense despite my having had a Bar Mitzvah, with all the Hebrew lessons it entailed, I was sufficiently Jewish (and, to have been killed by the Germans during the Holocaust had I been available, and I had close relatives who had been also by them. My paternal grandparents, elderly people in Bessarabia, who had refused to flee the town of Akkerman because they were unable to believe the stories of German atrocities, had been killed in a synagogue together with other Jews and been burned to death).

In going beyond Cape Horn, Neider has found a metaphor for creation, one to which man is not the crown. Perhaps the most memorable scene in this excellent book is Neider's encounter with some killer whales, who perform a "fantastic water ballet" between blocks of ice. Here the requirement to take photographs gives way to the need to engrave the scenes on his memory: "I have the uncanny sense that something mysterious and about which they know more than I is occurring between us, that perhaps it is ironically amused by me, the puny figure with fiercely red top, my parka. Again that word 'mysterious'. Do I parka, Neider, and take the plunge?

The Polish connection

By Peter Hebblethwaite

GEORGE HUNTSTON WILLIAMS:
The Mind of John Paul II
Origins of His Thought and Action
415pp. New York: Seabury Press.
\$24.95.
0 8164 0473 1

The John Paul II industry shows no sign of recession, even though publishers are becoming more choosy. The full effects of the attempted assassination of May 13 have yet to be seen. Meanwhile, George Huntston Williams' contribution is original, well researched and ecumenical in intent. It has no competitors.

His starting-point is that John Paul's pontificate "may best be understood by what he was before he became pontiff". It is the Polish background that alone can provide the interpretative key or keys. Williams is right. And he is better equipped than most to deal with this background: a theologian and the historian of Post-Reformation Poland, he spent a semester at the Catholic University of Lublin in 1972, where he was an academic colleague of Karol Wojtyla; he has an interest in "contingental" philosophy and Spanish mysticism required for dealing with the Pope's two theses on John of the Cross and Max Scheler; and finally, he was an "alternate" observer at Vatican Council II (1962-65), where he met and talked with the young Archbishop of Kraków.

So this is not a biography in any conventional sense. It is something much more urgently needed: an account of the intellectual and cultural milieu out of which John Paul II emerged to startle the world. It is valuable as an introduction to the Polish romantic literature in which Wojtyla, a poet himself, was steeped. Let me give three examples, from different fields, of the way

Williams throws new light on his subject.

In 1906 there was in Poland a schismatic group of married priests characterized by a strong devotion to Mary (the Mariavites). A visionary nun, Felicia Kozłowska, held them in thrall. She was known as "Mama" and eventually as "Maria". She believed in (first) spiritual and (then) carnal marriages between priests and nuns, with the latter distributing the Eucharist as equal partners. Hearing of these developments, Pius X promptly excommunicated the Mariavites who took refuge with the Old Catholics in 1909.

Now Pope John Paul yields to none in his devotion to Mary. But he would have remembered the warning example of the Mariavites when confronted by priests who wished to marry or nuns who wished to become priests. Sister Theresa Kane, who gently approached him on the question of women's ordination in Washington in October, 1979, did not realize the ghosts that she was conjuring up. On the other hand, John Paul draws close to the Mariavites in one respect. Out of sensitivity towards Orthodox beliefs, he omitted the *Filioque* from the creed. Back from his sickbed last Whitsunday, the Pope omitted the *Filioque* from the creed (and for the same reason).

Another extremely illuminating passage concerns Adam Sapieha, who spotted Wojtyla as a schoolboy and became his model of the priesthood. He was known as "Prince Prince" Sapieha because he was a prince by birth and, as Archbishop of Kraków, a prince of the Church. He was a throwback to a vanished world. As a student at the Jesuit University of Innsbruck before the First World War, Sapieha was one of the young noblemen who arrived "in their regional dress with stately retinues and sometimes their own chaplains". He quickly became a bishop, and on one occasion told the papal nuncio, Achille Ratti, to depart

when he unexpectedly turned up for a meeting of the Polish bishops. This proved to be unwise, for shortly afterwards Ratti became Pope Pius XI, and he never forgave Sapieha. Williams suggests that Pius's ban on prelates being involved in politics was directed against Sapieha, who sat in the Sejm as a member of the National Democratic Party. And he links this with John Paul's refusal to allow Father Robert Drinan SJ to stand for re-election to the US Congress in 1980. But he does not draw the other conclusion from the Sapieha affair. The notion that the Polish bishops, in their fierce loyalty to the Holy See, always had a harmonious relationship with the Vatican, is a fairy tale. Until Wojtyla was elected pope in 1978 they were usually at odds with the Vatican and felt badly misunderstood.

A third example of how digging away at the past throws light on Wojtyla's present is fresh information on Max Scheler, on whom he wrote his "Habilitation" thesis. Scheler is conventionally presented as a "Catholic phenomenologist" and a disciple of Edmund Husserl. The truth is more complicated. A Catholic convert from Judaism at an early age, he was expelled from the University of Munich in 1910 for unspecified "moral turpitude". Proceeding to Göttingen in order to sit at the feet of Husserl, he annoyed the master by being a more brilliant lecturer and gathering more pupils. After a spell in the Black Forest during the First World War, he was converted to Catholicism and wrote propaganda tracts in which he claimed that the Central Powers (Kraków was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) were defending "Christian civilization" against the hordes of English shopkeepers, who had never had a spiritual thought in their lives, against a secularized godless France, and against a Russian autocracy supported by a tame and subservient Orthodox Church. By 1923 Scheler was on to his third marriage, and

Wojtyla pays no attention to his subsequent work. But it could be that his suspicion of Britain (where he has never been) and of the United States harks back to this period. The attacks on "consumerism" are another version of the unspiritual shopkeeper thesis.

These are examples of how Williams uses the folk-memory or cultural antecedents to explain what would otherwise be puzzling. Of course there is no precise correlation, and one is free up to a point to do what one likes with a cultural inheritance, but they are illuminating.

The author is on less sure ground when it comes to strictly philosophical themes. Labels are slapped on all Sartre "a personalist existentialist", to suggest that Gargouillat was "the most distinguished authority in Christendom", or that François Mauriac and Graham Greene were "associated with situation ethics"? Though "phenomenology" is admittedly not easy to define, how helpful is it to say that "it sought to develop a valid methodology for mirroring a given reality in its essence and making it possible to presume its existence"? It is impossible to decide whether Williams takes Wojtyla's contribution to philosophy seriously. "The goal of *The Acting Person*", he solemnly tells us, "is to show that man is a person". On the contrary, that is its starting-point, its presupposition. The most devastating criticisms are mentioned quite casually: "Wojtyla's experience of truth is never disclosed... to the bafflement of the reader". Precisely. But if one cannot "redo the exercise", this philosophical style, lacking in examples, arguments and clearly stated alternative positions, becomes so much polysyllabic pomp.

Even more uncertain is Williams's handling of events in the Vatican after the election. These are seen from a distance and at third-hand. It is astonishing to read that

Archbishop Deskur "reigns over 300 journalists" in the Vatican Press Office. He has not been seen in Rome since the pontificate began. It is convincing in Switzerland. In any case, the notion of "ruling over" these turbulent individualists is a touching fantasy. The Dutch Synod of January, 1981, did not concern Flemish-speaking Belgium. Williams does not appear to know that Father M. Malinski, who was unwise enough to write a book called *My Friend Karol Wojtyla*, has been brutally disavowed. Nor is it true that we "do not have his [Wojtyla's] speeches at the plenary sessions" at the Synod: they have been published in Latin and Italian in a stout volume.

But despite these and many other errors of detail, Williams is excellent in his conclusion when he returns to "the papal transformation of Polish messianism". This is his strength. His book will be a valuable quarry for others. His value judgments are advanced with proper Protestant diffidence. "It would appear", he writes, "that the Pope perceives an urgent need for imposing, by a combination of persuasive good will and calculated severity, a greater degree of unity than Pope Paul saw fit to impose on the Church". The Pope instinctively finds repugnant the presence of seething discussions on social issues or theological disputes. It is probably easier for a Roman Catholic to say more bluntly that John Paul II cannot brook disagreement.

Scott on Himself: A Selection of the Autobiographical Writings of St. Walter Scott has recently been published by Scottish University Press in the Association for Scottish Literary Studies (298pp, £6.75). The editor, David Hewitt, has assembled selections from Scott's correspondence with Lady Abercorn, Lady Louisa Stuart, John Morritt and others, together with extended extracts from the *Journal* (1825-26).

Big is terrible

By Morris Philippon

THOMAS WHITESIDE:
The Blackbuster Complex
Conglomerates, Show Business, and Book Publishing
207pp. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press. \$16.80.
0 8195 5057 4

Mr Thomas Whiteside, on the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine, has written an analytic description of American commercial publishing as it has changed in the past twenty years; this is a contribution to business or economic history - a dispassionate, objective account of an outrageous situation. The effect on the reader is an appalled sense of loss regarding the life of the spirit - and a justified anxiety for the future of literary culture in the United States. The business history is a success story. It demonstrates how, in the course of the past two decades, "management" has introduced new methods in order to increase the financial profits of commercial publishing, at the price of narrowing the range of books made available to the public, and by catering to the lust for vulgarity which characterizes the new book-buyers. Business booms; the only losers are the majority of authors or aspiring writers, and all intelligent general readers.

A "blockbuster" book - deadly metaphor from the bomb that destroys everything within its scope - is the passionately desired object, the singular means to huge financial returns which has emerged as the object of worship, the key to monetary success, as a result of the "complex" of factors Whiteside enumerates as the strands in the noose around the neck of literary life in the United States today.

Up to 1959, the American book-

publishing business could have been described as a "... gentlemanly way of life. It may not have been considered a particularly profitable business, or a notably efficient one, but it was a business in which publishers and editors could feel sustained not only by their love of books but also by their sense of professional independence". At the end of the 1950s unattractive changes began to appear; but they followed from actions taken for the very opposite reasons. It was primarily in order to assure the continued independence of Random House and to protect the firm against the possibly devastating effects of estate-tax regulations, that Donald Klopfer and Bennett Cerf decided to establish its value by offering a public stock issue. It was the first of the privately owned publishing houses to be listed on Wall Street. For similar reasons, to protect the integrity and continuity of their firm, Blanche and Alfred A. Knopf, in the spring of 1960, merged Knopf with Random House. The value of the stock of the merged company began to rise - without any necessary relationship to actual increases in sales.

What happened, by the mid-1960s, was that voracious large electronics companies became interested in publishing houses, because it appeared as if, with federal aid-to-education programmes under President Johnson, there would be a boom in electronically oriented systems of "teaching machines" for public schools; and publishers of text-books controlled the "software". It is doubtful whether the executives of such electronics companies were even aware of the trade-book divisions of publishing firms. But the dream of technology supplementing or substituting for human teachers evaporated; federal funds for education shrank as the war in Vietnam

escalated. Nevertheless, by then, RCA had acquired Random House, CBS had bought Holt, Rinehart and Winston; and Time, Inc. had bought the Book-of-the-Month Club. Other firms merged, even if they were not taken over subsequently by a conglomerate, and "... their owners and managers found that although they still controlled the companies... the kinds of decisions that they had been used to making... were likely to be tempered by considerations they had never before had to reckon with". They were beholden to the owners of their stock; they felt obliged to become more efficient in order to be more profitable. Even at a time when all of their expenses, from overheads to the inflation of paper, printing, and binding costs were increasing, the monies available to them from their conglomerate owners made possible the escalation of competitive bidding for popular writers with ever larger amounts of "advances" - i.e. payments to authors in advance not only of royalties earned but often in advance of the book being written. The rationale for such speculative investments was the reasonable hope that the return on the investment out of subsidiary rights - for paperback reprints, film rights, TV licences, etc. - would be ample reward. The risk would be richer. No one can be credited with the presence of having recognized at that time, the late 1960s, that the increasing emphasis on the big book, the "Blockbuster", because of the fortunes that lay in subsidiary rights, would bring about a transformation in publishing procedures, judgment, and economics. Whiteside shows that "the communications-entertainment world" is now the tail that wags the publishing dog. What was once a "subsidiary" or secondary benefit following the investment in the decision to publish a book has become either the determining factor or the

originating source regarding that decision itself.



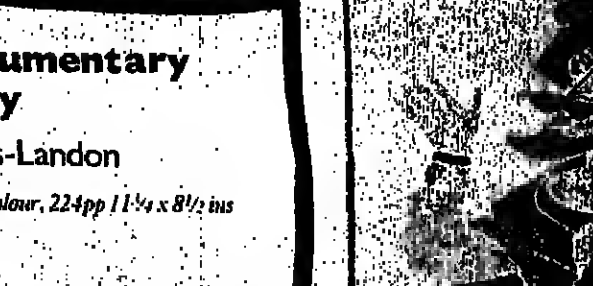
"One sign of this sort of adaptation is that, as time goes on, the language of the corporate merchandiser seems ever more a part of the workaday speech of book publishers and editors. Indeed, much of what publishers and editors are doing is becoming ever more closely entangled with what advertising men, television producers and talk-show hosts, and Hollywood producers and packagers are doing". And it is all meretricious. The successful author is an unpaid actor advertising a "product" by television and radio appearances to promote sales by discussing what his or her book is "about" with an interviewer who has certainly not read the work. The chain stores which thrive on high-volume sales of hard-cover books, quick turnover of stock, computerized systems of accounting and inventory control have a greater impact on the "marketability" of a book than any editor's investment of belief in the value of a literary work. Wholesaling distributors of paperback reprints have a similar stranglehold on which books are given "rack space". The whole process - of a worthwhile book becoming successful in respect to subsidiary rights subsequent to publication in hard cover - has been reversed to the point that "actual authorship often becomes an ancillary consideration in... the spon-taneous generation of a literary property" which "... occurs around a conference table in the office of a producer or an agent" in Los Angeles.

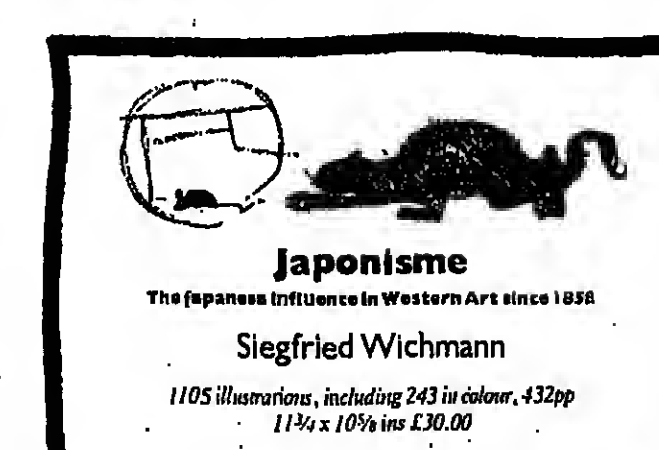
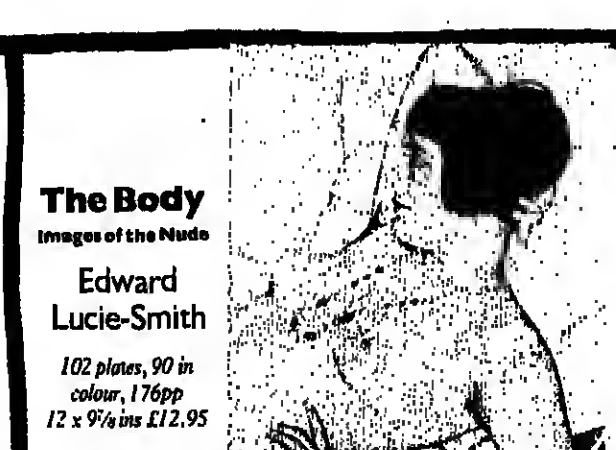
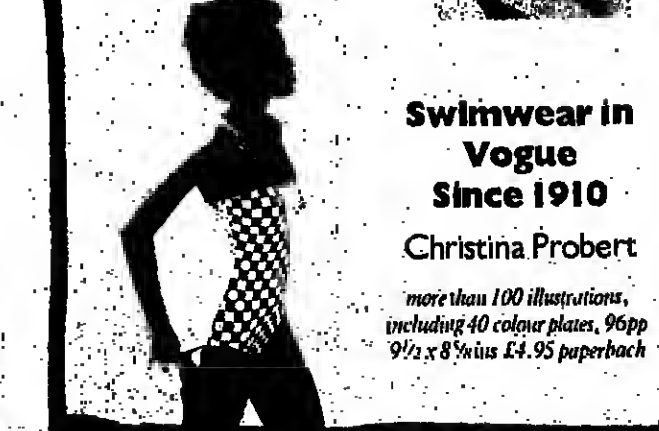
If these are non-traditional methods, they are nevertheless justified by the new owners. What they want is not unreasonable. "They had paid large sums to acquire the publishing houses, and that money was supposed to be recouped again, in an

orderly way. Given the vast resources of the conglomerates and their experience with and understanding of modern merchandising techniques, a determined program of seeking out, buying, and promoting best-sellers seemed to be the surest way for the acquired companies to exert their new economic clout and capture dominant shares in the trade-book market". But the effect on writers, as well as on editors, is to polarize both classes into the entrepreneurs and the literateurs. The rich get richer; the poor may well drop out of the scene. Good books that several years ago would have been licensed for a few thousand dollars for a paperback reprint are no longer given "a second chance"; the rich paperback reprinters can't afford to acquire twenty books a year for five thousand dollars apiece when he has invested over a million dollars for one blockbuster; and the wholesalers won't take the "little" books on, anyway, because the rack space is reserved for the high-volume turnover "item".

The entrepreneurs may justify themselves, for example, through ideas such as those of Richard Snyder, of Simon and Schuster, who states that the company's books are successful through the chain stores because they

... serve a different community of book readers from any that the book business has ever had before - book readers with different tastes. The elitism of the book market doesn't exist any more... There has been an elitism here about reading books. Up to now, only a certain class read books, and the book-distribution mechanism was for that class. Now, all of a sudden - boom! You are feeding books to people who formerly read nothing... If people read a terrible book, at least

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**Thames
and
Hudson
1981**

there's a book in the house... I say it's good - better that people read a commercial book than read nothing. It's a step up.

Mr Snyder may have a point; but, while there is much evidence for how successfully a terrible book may come to be sold, there is no indication of what will be available in the chain store of the shopping mall for the suburbanite who "formerly read nothing" when, by some advantage of "a step up", she wants to read a worthwhile book.

Mr Whiteside tells this whole grim story with admirable journalistic accuracy. As a writer, editor, and publisher, I have been involved with and affected by much of the story he tells. I was on the staff of Alfred A. Knopf in 1960, when it was bought by Random House, and in 1980 I was on the Board of Directors of the American Book Awards when it was much maligned. I fully believe that none of Whiteside's facts nor any of his interpretation is wrong. He has described the radical change in American publishing correctly and dispassionately - except for a few "editorial" remarks. Referring to the unexpected power exercised by authors' agents in the new situation, "A goes so far as to consider them: 'A rather slender reed against which to lean the integrity of contemporary American literature'". His concluding criticism is offered without elaboration, namely that "the mass merchandising, the hype, the frenzied pursuit of Number One which the book-publishing industry has turned to as a central and universal tool is in its very essence anti-art, and even anti-thought".

The implications of this report must be faced, for there is a real and present danger. We can leave out of consideration much publishing that continues to be carried out reasonably well in the United States. The *Blockbuster Complex* does not deal with technical or professional journals, text-books or scholarly books. Although it purports to deal with commercial books in general, the focus and the force of the study comes to centre almost exclusively on fiction, and for good reason, it is

less easy to "hype" up a work of non-fiction, nor is the potential "all-or-nothing" gambit on a work of history, biography, or political criticism likely to bring the same financial windfall as the software "product" for the communications-entertainment network.

What is at risk here is the future range of fiction, of imaginative literature, that quality of literary culture which, through lapses and renewals, has been enriched since the beginnings of the humanist tradition founded in the Italian and the English Renaissance. The cultivation of a critical cast of mind has flowered in works of literature both abstractly speculative and concretely imaginative. The latter, whether expressed in essays, poems, plays, short stories or novels, have contributed to the formation of the values of the increasingly larger class of general readers as well as the intelligentsia. It is a verbal tradition through which thought and feeling are communicated and shared; to be engaged by it is to be cultivated - for the raw material of one's own limited emotions and ideas to be both extended and refined by encounters with the sensibility and intelligence of others. To read such books is to accept the invitation to think with someone else's mind; it is a unique way to benefit from the experience of others: living or dead.

Within this tradition, there has always been a wide range of choices among works of the imagination to please individual tastes: from high-culture seriousness and charm, through a middle range of adventure, mystery, rapportage, and humour, to the low level of day-dreaming or other forms of fantasy, whether in the direction of Erica Jong, the *Mirquis de Sade*, Horatio Alger, or Mary Baker Eddy. In this regard, to read imaginative writing is always escapism, to escape from one's own moral or intellectual limitations - to escape into something better, or something worse and, thereby, be refined into something superior, confirmed in one's own familiar formation, or debased into something less admirable. With respect to this range, the elite have always been

self-selected; but the objective possibility of choice depends upon what is available.

During this century, the Man of Letters has disappeared - the writer who might just as easily produce a novel as a play, a volume of poems, criticism or hellellettristic essays. He is as much a victim of The Age of Specialization as the audience is a victim of the new tradition of the visual as against the verbal. We now have two generations of Americans raised first on motion pictures and then on television, so that Mr Snyder's description of the woman in the shopping mall "who formerly read nothing" is entirely credible. The danger is that, if commercial publishing remains primarily in the grip of "the blockbuster complex", it is only the kind of novels she can be persuaded to buy that will be brought out. Neither our educators nor our literary critics seem to have any power to oppose this trend. Our educational system demonstrates no ability to inculcate a love of reading and the habit of book-buying strong enough to counter the passive speciality of the "communications-entertainment" industry. The reviewers and critics of the East Coast literary establishment spend more energy debunking the competitors for blockbuster status than in employing their talents to show potential readers what is good in the books they respect. The entertainment complex has usurped and preempted their role.

The ultimate success story with which Whiteside concludes his book is how the paperback rights for the second novel by Judith Krantz, *Princess Daisy*, in the excitement of fourteen-and-a-half hours of auctioning, came to be acquired by Bantam Books for an advance of \$3,208,875. The fortunate Mrs Krantz is quoted as saying: "I'm not trying to be taken seriously by the East Coast literary establishment. But I'm taken very seriously by the bankers". For the auction of reprint rights to *Princess Daisy* to become front-page news is to say that - between Hollywood agents and producers, hard-cover and paperback publishers - the presumed value of a book is deter-

mined in advance of publication (and sometimes in advance of its being written) by its imagined sales potential alone. Financial value in the marketplace is a self-fulfilling prophecy - which shows that the cart can be put before the horse. In the few instances where the gamble does not pay off, the corporate owners have only to fire the managers and replace them with more daring entrepreneurs. And they do so.

It is a case of Gresham's Law once again: "Bad money drives good money out of circulation". When, in order to keep more of the Treasury for himself, Henry VIII debased the English pound (causing a general rise in prices and a fall of the exchange rate), the heavier, more valuable coins were either hoarded or exported. As American literature is debased for the sole purpose of increasing profit to the "property" owners, more talented writers will go into other fields or keep their writing to themselves. One cannot appeal to maintain the mainstream of high seriousness as well as increasing their profit, because they have not read the right books to have such values confirmed in their moral formation.

I say "as well as" because I have no objection to publishers and authors making a lot of money. What I object to is a situation in which, in order for a few of them to make enormous amounts of money, the majority of authors must make less and less. I do not begrudge Judith Krantz her millions; what I resent is that my novels are out of print, as are the novels and short stories and essays of many contemporary authors whom I admire. These reflections are being written in a cottage in northern Michigan during a summer holiday. There is no book store in the town, but the general store on the main street has, for all the years my family has come here, offered a large selection of paperback reprints. It was one of the pleasures of hop-hazard summer reading to discover in that shop books by interesting, thoughtful, original, engaging authors. This year not one book by any

such author is available. The three long sections of racks for paperbacks have been reduced to one - which contains only books with titles like *Raging Passions* or *Smoking Guns* and *Countess Valiant*; westerns, gothics, romances - and bestsellers. Everything Whiteside says in *The Blockbuster Complex* is true. The economics of commercial publishing have overwhelmed the sociology of literary taste. My opportunities are reduced to thinking with the mind of either a Louis L'Amour or a Barbara Cartland. Some choice.

The author offers a few slight hopes for the future. "... there are editors who, stepping aside from regular staff employment at a publishing house, elect to make special profit-sharing arrangements with that publisher or another - arrangements in which the publisher puts out under the editor's imprint books that the editor has acquired. In a way, the juggernaut advance of big-book publishing may have given special impetus to the more ingenious and spirited of those editors, since comparatively few manuscripts and authors are considered to be in the big-book league; and some of the better university presses have similarly benefited from the availability of manuscripts of merit that the big conglomerate-owned houses are not interested in touching."

Mr Whiteside's book is published by the Wesleyan University Press and distributed by the Columbia University Press. Thus does he exemplify his own generalization.

The biography of the legendary American publisher's editor, Mr Perkins, which was first published in 1978 and reviewed in the *TLS* on July 28 of that year, has recently been reissued as a paperback by Macdonald Futura (64pp, £2.95, 0 7088 1778 5). The book which traces Perkins' long career as an editor for Scribner's and is rich in anecdotes about his working methods, renews the vigour of American publishing in the 1920s and 1930s. The core of the book is its account of Perkins' relationships with Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe.

BIOGRAPHY

MARGARET LAVINIA ANDERSON:
Windthorst
A Political Biography
\$22pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £25.
0 19 822578 4

The role of the Catholics in German social and political life over the past two hundred years has been a difficult one for historians to assess. The Catholics do not fit into the categories in which historians, especially over the past twenty years, have been accustomed to study German history. While they were in many areas economically backward and accordingly can be regarded as part of the section of German society which was retarding modernization, they were also, because of the necessity of preserving their identity under the harsh oppression of the *Kulturkampf*, the only group other than the Social Democrats to form an effective party political organization in the Bismarckian empire, and so pointed forward to modern types of political activity. In the 1870s and 1880s at least, they were, because of their experience of persecution, committed to the protection of civil rights as well as being opposed to centralization. That they became after Bismarck's fall increasingly a party of government, so that both before 1918 and in the Weimar Republic they were an indispensable component of any majority in parliament, is a fact of German political history that still needs much explanation. David Blackburn in his *Class, Religion and Local Politics in Germany* made a major contribution to the discussion of the problem for the period 1890 to 1914; and now Margaret Lavinia Anderson has, in her political biography of Ludwig Windthorst, provided a scholarly and original study of Catholic politics in Germany between 1866 and Windthorst's death in 1891.

Catholics and the Chancellor

By James Joll

Windthorst was a remarkable figure in many ways. His physical appearance was odd enough: only five feet tall, nearly blind, very ugly and with a rasping voice, he did not seem to have the physical presence to be the outstanding orator and parliamentary figure he was to become. Starting as a small-town lawyer in Osnabrück, he twice became Minister of Justice for the Kingdom of Hanover, in 1851 and again in 1862, so that by the time of the annexation of Hanover by Prussia in 1866 and the exile of King George (to the interests of whose family Windthorst remained devoted to the end of his life) he was already an experienced politician of fifty-four. It must be admitted that the early part of this biography is rather dull: few people will find a detailed account of Hanoverian politics in the 1850s en- thralling and Professor Anderson's rather clumsy style does not make for easy reading. (A sentence such as "Inopportunities was undoubtedly not the only reason for Windthorst's strenuous efforts to prevent the dogmatism of papal infallibility" is not an unfair example.) But as soon as Windthorst becomes a national politician, involved in the drama of the *Kulturkampf* and the Vatican's relations with Germany, the story becomes a fascinating one, the interest of which goes far beyond Windthorst's own career.

At the time of his seventy-ninth birthday in 1891, two months before his death, the Reichstag paid Windthorst the unusual tribute of a formal expression of their congratulations. It was an honour more justified than some of those who supported it perhaps realized, for more than any other politician of the Bismarckian period, Windthorst had shown how Bismarck could be used to curb the influence of the Catholic Church does not go very deep (for a subtler account one must turn, for instance,

conclusion. "In the 1880s the legislature was still the voice of the people, the focus of the national drama, the scene of Germany's great expectations. By guarding and defending constitutional liberties and by insisting that legislation be constructed universally and applied fairly, Windthorst offered his countrymen a new understanding of law." The tragedy is that that understanding, even within his own party, did not outlast his death.

Windthorst's development from a rather conservative provincial politician to a national statesman who, as Anderson says, "like Gladstone... moved farther to the Left the older he became, and like Gladstone... was motivated by advantage and conviction in about equal measure" was almost entirely the work of Bismarck. In a famous remark Bismarck said in 1875, "Hatred is just as great an incentive in life as love. My life is sustained and made pleasant by two things: my wife and Windthorst. One exists for love, the other for hate." Windthorst's reputation as David to Bismarck's Goliath grew first out of his anger at Prussian treatment of his native Hanover and then out of Bismarck's decision to persecute the Catholic Church. Until then, Windthorst's political beliefs had been a mixture of mild conservatism and mild liberalism, of Burke and J. S. Mill, two authors whom he admired, and his attitude to politics that of a rather dull provincial lawyer who was not particularly involved in the activities of the local Catholic community. The *Kulturkampf* transformed him as a political figure and turned the *Zentrum* from a small Prussian group of sectarian politicians into a national party. Anderson's analysis of the origins of Bismarck's decision to attempt to limit the influence of the Catholic Church does not go very deep (for a subtler account one must turn, for instance,

to Lothar Gall's recent biography of Bismarck), but her analysis of its effects is most illuminating. It is easy to overlook the extent of the persecution of the Catholics which the enforcement of the laws introduced at Bismarck's instigation caused, especially in Prussia, just as it is important to remember the degree of resistance shown by Catholics. "No Prussian bishop fulfilled his obligation to register clerical appointments with the governor for approval. As a result, celebrants were arrested during illegal masses; in Ohlau the priest was snatched from the tabernacle to be used in court as evidence." When the property of the octogenarian Bishop of Münster was seized, Catholic laymen bought it back at auction and carried it to the bishop's residence in triumph. In 1874 a troop of hussars and half a company of infantry were needed in Trier to disperse an angry crowd of over a thousand who were protecting their seminary professors against expulsion by the police. The consequences of the anti-Catholic laws were the opposite to what Bismarck had expected or intended: the Catholics became consciously alienated from the new Reich rather than meekly incorporated into it. They refused to take part in national celebrations; they dissociated themselves from expressions of sympathy for the Emperor after the attempt on his life in 1878. The result was that there were some 36 per cent of the population of Germany whose loyalty to the state had to be regained over the next twenty years.

Politically the effect was to transform the *Zentrum* into a powerful political grouping which became the natural ally of other minority groups - Poles, Guelts, Danes, Alsations. The effects on Windthorst's career were equally great. He became a famous national, and indeed international political figure, but he was

also a man of sufficient principle to see that the oppression of one minority was linked to the oppression of others. Consequently, to the alarm of many Catholics and of the Vatican itself, he became an opponent of the anti-socialist law of 1878 which inflicted on the Social Democrats restrictions comparable to those suffered by the Catholics, and even more surprisingly considering the prejudices of many of his own supporters, he was an equally strong opponent of the anti-Semitism which was spreading in Germany in the 1880s. Accordingly, he was at times prepared to work with the left-wing liberals and even with the Social Democrats. Nevertheless, the sectarian basis of the Centre Party prevented it from becoming a permanent partner of the parties of the Left, and even if it had done so, the Bismarckian constitution effectively ruled out any chance that such a coalition might form an alternative government. By the 1880s Bismarck was, for a number of reasons, quietly allowing the anti-Catholic legislation of the previous decade to lapse; one reason was the strength and influence of the Centre Party, although he never agreed to the wholesale repeal of the legislation as Windthorst consistently demanded.

If the Church was no longer in need of defence, what was the role of the Centre Party to be? As long as Windthorst was alive he was able to keep the party together as an effective opposition to Bismarck. "After Windthorst's death", Professor Anderson writes, "the 'disidence of dissent' lost its legitimacy, and political Catholicism began to gravitate back to its former, more conservative position on the political spectrum". The Centre Party of the 1890s, though keeping its role as a focus of Catholic opinion and of Catholic political activity, became, like so many other organizations in

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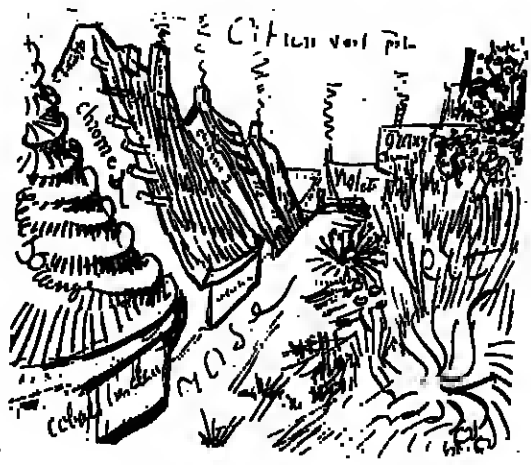
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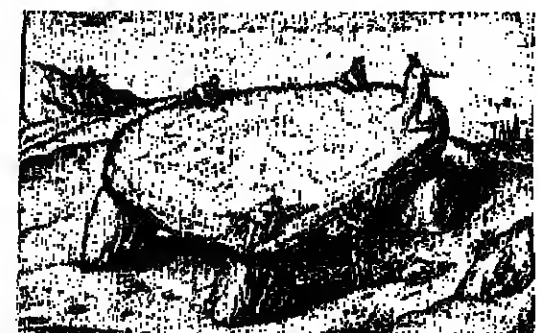
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Thames and Hudson 1982

Wilhelm Germany, a means of halting conflicting economic interests; but Windthorst's successors also saw themselves as representing the Catholic community into German national life. From being a party opposition they became a party of government.

Windthorst's own career had overshadowed two important developments in his party. He was himself schematically a member of the middle classes: his modest provincial origins and his personal frugality separated him from the Catholic *grands seigneurs*. His "entire appearance," as one observer recalled, "was petty bourgeois". And although his emergence as a party leader was helped by his alliance with some of the Catholic aristocracy, notably Hermann von Mallinckrodt, his remarkable success as a political orator and parliamentarian showed the next generation of Centre Party leaders that bourgeois origins could be a positive advantage. The other way in which Windthorst pointed in the direction which the Centre Party - and indeed its successor in our own day, the CDU - was to take was in his relations with the Vatican. After the death of Pius IX in 1878, the new Pope Leo XIII was for a number of reasons anxious for a reconciliation with the German state, and Windthorst was asked by the Vatican on several occasions to support the government - over the Anti-Socialist Law or the army budgets of 1880 and 1887, for

example. In each case Windthorst refused, arguing that while he regarded it as his duty to resist any threats to the freedom of the Church, other issues were purely political; and on these the party leadership must be free to decide without interference from the Vatican. One of the best things in Professor Anderson's book is her account of Leo XIII's efforts to get the Centre Party to support Bismarck's army bill in 1887 and of the complex and devious intrigues at the Vatican and within the German ecclesiastical hierarchy ending in Windthorst's last great tactical triumph.

The desire to keep the Centre Party free of control from the Vatican and to keep open as many alternative courses of political action as possible, without reference to any overriding principle or authority, had its dangers, which were to become apparent under Windthorst's successors. Even in Windthorst's time, the party had sometimes been accused of opportunism, of keeping its options open so as to win concessions in return for its votes in parliament. A leading liberal, Eduard Lasker, had put it as follows: "This facile mobility is its strength, and basically one cannot censure it so very much when it places one point which it considers an ethical one far in the foreground and says: next to this profane issue are for us completely indifferent and are to be used as small change to make up the difference in trade." As

the disabilities imposed by the *Kulturkampf* were gradually removed, so the ethical points which the Centre Party placed in the foreground became increasingly fewer and the small change for trading all the greater. The Centre Party's parliamentary freedom of manoeuvre grew, and with it the temptation to exercise power without responsibility.

Professor Anderson has written a very valuable biography, and although she is not setting out to take sides in the current controversies among historians of Wilhelm Germany, her conclusions will give considerable support to those British historians such as Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn who are challenging the view dominant in Germany that the politics of the Wilhelm era are to be explained solely in terms of manipulation from above and of the imposition of the values of the old feudal elite on the new industrial society. She tells one a great deal about the political structure and functioning of Bismarck's Germany and the various options for German political development which were still open even in the 1880s. One reads the opening chapters of this book with a feeling that it is going to be a dull book about a dull man, but one ends with an increased knowledge and understanding of important and neglected aspects of Bismarckian Germany as well as of a remarkable individual.



The Empress Eugénie, consort of Napoleon III, in old age. Much of her long life was spent in exile in England; she is buried at Farnborough, Hampshire, beside her husband and son, both of whom she survived for more than forty years. The photograph above, taken in 1914, forms one of the numerous illustrations in *The Last Courts of Europe* (256pp, Dent, £12.95, 0 460 04519 9) by Jeffrey Finestone. (See also cover illustration.)

Rule of three

By Oswyn Murray

HENRI-PIERRE ROCHÉ:

Jules and Jim
Translated by Patrick Evans
239pp. Marion Boyars. £6.95.
0 7145 2749 1

Ignorance is a constant source of pleasure: discovering now the book behind *Jules et Jim* is like actually reading Henry Murguer's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* after twenty years' apprenticeship with Puccini. Indeed it is not only the relationship between minor work and its transformation into a masterpiece in a different art form which is illuminated by this comparison; for in all important respects except his long-lived Henri-Pierre Roché seems to repeat the experience of the first Bohemian two generations earlier. Like Murguer, Roché was a fringe member of the artistic world of Montmartre, a friend of Duchamp, Brancusi, Braque, Satie and Picasso; like *Scènes de la vie*, *Jules et Jim* is an autobiographical novel. In both works an apparently light-hearted fantasy has revealed, through being transposed into a different medium, its latent didacticism. And this message is essentially the same.

We are in Paris during *La belle époque* at the *Bal des Quinze Arts*: a friendship is born between two men. The self-indulgence typical of autobiography, where all is explained or excused by the fact that it actually happened, they explore a world of women: Gertrude, Lucie, Magda, Odile and others. Then suddenly the book takes off with the arrival of Kate of the archaic smile, and the story that Truffaut transformed unfolds. It is a delightful account of three people sharing and unsharing each other over a period of twenty years. The emphasis shifts in turn from one character to another, but in the end the same puzzle remains: why does Kate kill herself and Jim?

The gratuitousness of the final tragedy serves only to heighten the meaning of the series of almost equally gratuitous sexual humiliations with which Kate has enslaved her lovers over the years. Truffaut takes much besides the denied plot from Roché, most notably perhaps the cool third person narrative technique, and the naïveté which gives an unrelenting freshness to every act; indeed it is clear how congenial Truffaut has found Roché's tone from the fact that *Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent* is also based on a book by him. It is a consequence of this one-dimensional presentation that over twenty years the characters do not change; they merely experience events. At the end they are the same charmingly casual students that they had been in 1907 - which is only to repeat that the final tragedy is not explained.

If we return to Murguer, we can perhaps see the reason for the power of *Jules et Jim* as book or film. The latent didactic element that Puccini brought out was the morality inherent in Bohemianism, and more especially the existence of grand passion and true love, without faithfulness and amid ordinary poverty: it was the artistic recognition of an alternative morality of love. A century later the same theme is illuminated against the same backdrop. The generation of *Jules et Jim* was well used to the idea of student love in gaiety and rags; but Truffaut knew that history was potentially shocking, because it portrayed love and friendship as equal, and the goal (whether it is reached or not) perhaps the ambiguity in Kate's final act of possessiveness as being passion again at the beginning. "We must rediscover the rules, taking risks and paying on the nail." This was a deliberate assault on current moral attitudes, and a successful one: it is strange that Henri-Pierre Roché of the novel is apparently so concerned with his story that he does not seem to recognize its moral dimension. But without Roché's artlessness and light-heartedness, perhaps Truffaut would never have found his voice.

Slapstick and body-slashing

By D. M. Thomas

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH:

Pretender to the Throne
The Further Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin
Translated by Richard Lourie
357pp, Jonathan Cape. £7.95.
0 224 01966 X

Soviet dissident authors are no more immune than anyone else to the temptation to try to repeat an earlier success, and Vladimir Voinovich is no exception. Rarely are second parts as successful as the first; and I do not think these "Further Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin" match the comic vitality of *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*, though they are always entertaining and at times brilliant.

Voinovich's reluctance to let Private Chonkin go is understandable. Ivan is a young and simple peasant, related to the archetypal "Ivan the Fool" of Russian folklore - whose naïveté, muddle-headedness, and common good nature are constantly getting him both into and out of trouble at the hands of corrupt officials. He is from the village of Chonkino, where practically everyone is named Chonkin, many are called Ivan, and not a few share the hero's patronymic too - Vssilyevich.

In an alien light

By Galen Strawson

ADAM MARS-JONES:
Lantern Lecture
198pp. Faber. £6.95.
0 571 11813 5

Adam Mars-Jones's subjects - the objects of his fictions - are real people and events. The first of his three stories, "Lantern Lecture", concerns a notable eccentric, Philip Yorke of Eddid Hall; the second, "Hoosh-Mi, A Farrago of Scurrilous Untruths", concerns the royal family, and carries the following hermetically sealed disclaimer on its title page: "The events and characters of this disclaimer are without exception fictitious; any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental." The third story, "Batpool Park", recounts the life and crimes of Donald Neilson, the "Black Panther", kidnapper of Lesley Whitte.

Starting from publicly available facts, Mars-Jones moves away from them in a variety of different ways. "Lantern Lecture", for example, subjects the life of Philip Yorke to chronological cut-up. Everything is levelled into the present tense and redistributed, a controlled jumble of lantern-slides. The life is already superbly odd; the art in Mars-Jones's treatment of it lies partly in the new juxtapositions and sequences that his chronological reorganization yields.

But it lies also in the delicate and unerringly unconventional manner in which he apprehends the actions and convictions of this Christian man, who "in a succession of dying cars... pollsters through the countryside on errands so small that no-one else would hear their call"; and in the maddening, curiously ruthless and often beautiful phrasing. There are incidents that one is inclined to call charming; but at the same time it seems inappropriate, as being passion again at the beginning. "We must rediscover the rules, taking risks and paying on the nail." This was a deliberate assault on current moral attitudes, and a successful one: it is strange that Henri-Pierre Roché of the novel is apparently so concerned with his story that he does not seem to recognize its moral dimension. But without Roché's artlessness and light-heartedness, perhaps Truffaut would never have found his voice.

"Hoosh-mi, la" - a nonsense word coined by Princess Margaret as a child, and means (as a noun) *mixed food* of any sort, or by extension (like the similar words *clash-mash*, *Crown-Cout*; but integral to this is Orderly Jumble. As a verb it means

The author, who was himself a manual worker, and who later got into deep trouble with the Soviet authorities because of the straightforward honesty of his stories, is obviously very much at home with Chonkin. The character is Russian but also universal; one can imagine him portrayed on film by Norman Wisdom in a relatively serious mood.

In the first book, Chonkin had been sent by his unit to guard a plane that had come down in the middle of nowhere. The army had forgotten him, and the plane's existence, and he had doggedly gone on guarding it, consoling by the warm body of a postmistress, Nyura, who lived in a nearby house. At the end of the novel, however, he is arrested as a traitor. In the new book, published since Voinovich's move to the West, we see Ivan languishing in prison (while Nyura vainly struggles to procure his freedom), convicted of being a White Guard agent attempting to restore the monarchy, and sentenced to death. The absurd accusation arises from the fact that an investigator, visiting Chonkino, hears a rumour that an "Ivan Chonkin" was the bastard son of Prince Golitsyn. Ivan becomes "the so-called Chonkin. White Chonkin, Chonkin-Golitsyn, and finally... Golitsyn-Chonkin". Beria himself puts the finishing touch, by crossing out the superfluous "Chonkin", before forwarding the Golitsyn case to Stalin.

Boris Evgenievich turned to his wife. "And where is our...?" He chewed his lips, trying to remember his son's name. "And where is that little boy of ours?" His wife wiped away her tears on the collar of her dress, looked over at Boris Evgenievich with a long, questioning glance, then suddenly, having come to some realisation, said: "And just how old do you think our little boy is?" "Three and a half," said Ermolkin, but then was immediately seized by doubt. "Isn't that right?"

to stir up." Mars-Jones's "Hoosh-mi" is a tightly controlled hoosh-mi of truths and untruths. The royal family - horses, homeopathy and all - is warped on the loom of imagination, and the roof of fiction is threaded in. A rabid bat flies the Atlantic. It bites a corgi (a corgi called Evesham Pontius Megezzoe III). The corgi, fatally, licks his mistress's face; his mistress is the queen. The rabies works within her slowly, and we follow the stages of physical degeneration - Mars-Jones is an expert symptomatologist. It becomes critical only on an Australian tour, and by then it's far too late to save her.

A panoply of detail provides the basis for this "defamiliarization" of the royal family. Mars-Jones seems to combine apparently limitless historical erudition with great selective accuracy; interspersed with the more serious and subtle reflections on the characters of his royal subjects - he is especially intrigued by Prince Philip - and on the condition of modern monarchy, the condition of being a public object. He does this partly in the person of Dr Bull, who delivers, intermittently, a talk on "Royalty and the Unreal".

The language throughout is that of the learned journal, and Mars-Jones's inavertent gains by the pedagogical sobriety of his medium. Having commented on the queen's respect for precedent and orthodoxy, having noted the inefficiency of "rituated" and succeeded potencies of *arsenicum album*, *atropa belladonna*, and *allium cepa* against the rabies virus, he observes that "it is at this point which be upholds the actions and convictions of this Christian man, who 'in a succession of dying cars... pollsters through the countryside on errands so small that no-one else would hear their call'; and in the maddening, curiously ruthless and often beautiful phrasing. There are incidents that one is inclined to call charming; but at the same time it seems inappropriate, as being passion again at the beginning. "We must rediscover the rules, taking risks and paying on the nail." This was a deliberate assault on current moral attitudes, and a successful one: it is strange that Henri-Pierre Roché of the novel is apparently so concerned with his story that he does not seem to recognize its moral dimension. But without Roché's artlessness and light-heartedness, perhaps Truffaut would never have found his voice.

"Batpool Park" is the longest of the three stories, and a *tour de force*. Most of it consists in the sharp, short-paragraphed reportage of Neilson's crimes, and his trial in Oxford Crown Court; but integral to this are Mars-Jones's own plausible specula-

Ruth Hitler and Stalin become involved in the Golitsyn affair. The Führer orders Gudcrin to switch his tank attack from Moscow to the small town where Ivan is awaiting execution; hence the miraculous escape of Moscow. In the Soviet High Command, confusion is so rife that the local garrison commander receives simultaneously, from the same official, an order to shoot Golitsyn at once and to send Chonkin to Moscow to receive an award. The wilder Voinovich's imagination becomes, the funnier he is, and the better he writes. He follows Gogol in these passages, and is worthy of the master. There is a wonderful surrealist portrait of a newspaper editor, Ermolkin, so dedicated to his office that "one would think that a Linotype machine had given birth to him". One night he makes the extraordinary decision to visit his wife and child:

Boris Evgenievich turned to his wife. "And where is our...?" He chewed his lips, trying to remember his son's name. "And where is that little boy of ours?" His wife wiped away her tears on the collar of her dress, looked over at Boris Evgenievich with a long, questioning glance, then suddenly, having come to some realisation, said: "And just how old do you think our little boy is?" "Three and a half," said Ermolkin, but then was immediately seized by doubt. "Isn't that right?"

with having secret lives and unstable personalities. But when he is told that Priss is Ludley's sister, his simple-mindedness is shattered: the information shocks him into accepting the complexities of individuals, and at the same time it seems to simplify the past. No wonder Ludley left Djakarta - to escape imprisonment for incest. The revelation has a similarly profound effect on Ludley himself. For one thing, it encourages him to resist Helen's advances; his difficult refusal "is the only thing I can offer to propitiate God." For another, it forces him to confront the various kinds of moral cowardice in which he feels he has indulged - and to blame his father: "what a swine he was! If he had been only halfway decent, I would not have been in such a hurry to hate God, to hate him by denying him, and deny him by tucking my sister..."

Ludley is much less forthcoming about his former public life than he is about his private one. He decides not to reveal anything until Helen has been removed from his sight. Before Milson can arrange this, however, fate intervenes. Ludley, Priss and Charlie are drowned in a storm, and Simon - showing exactly the same unpredictability he had puzzled over in others - falls for Helen. "He stimulated his flagging appetite by vying the ways in which he made love to her, and went on to enact pantomimes of his own invention. He called her his 'pet', tied a poodle's collar around her neck, and let her make love on all fours around the Ludley's bedroom. As soon as they leave for England, he regrets it. Helen turns out to be not only a bore, but also under-age. And when Milson attends Ludley's and Priss's funeral, personal considerations are once again shown to have a public dimension. Leslie Baldwin appears after the service and reveals himself as a traitor who was working for the Communists in Djakarta during the 1960s, just as he has been, elsewhere, ever since. True to form, he tries to buy Milson's silence by showing him compromising photographs which have been taken during the lustful and illegal interlude with Helen.

This blackmail provokes a final résumé of the novel's theme. When Milson goes to the Foreign Office and tells all - expecting imprisonment and disgrace - his bosses simply decide to carry on with Baldwin as if they had discovered nothing: "a spy can be useful if he doesn't know we know". Private morality, Piers Paul Read implies, is always subject to the brusque morality of the state. It is a conclusion which is made most resonant in *The Villa Golitsyn* when he uses a matter-of-fact style, and allows the oddities and ironies of his historical context to speak for themselves. But within the novel's plausibly factual framework is a more obviously "imaginative" fiction - and here, for all the plain language and cunning interweaving of past and present, extraordinary events like the storm seem stubbornly and freakishly melodramatic.

For Milson to be so surprised by the dramatic change in Ludley people that he will not credit people

The Cheltenham Festival of Literature will be held this year from 11 to 18 October. Programmes and tickets are available from the Festival Office, Town Hall, Imperial Square, Cheltenham, Glos. GL50 1QA.

F.O. affairs

By Andrew Motion

PIERS PAUL READ:
The Villa Golitsyn
193pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.95.
0 435 40968 2

"If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." Piers Paul Read's new novel explores the implications of Forster's celebrated remark in a narrative of engrossing complexity. It begins with an account of an incident in the undeclared war between Indonesia and Malaya during the 1960s, in which an English officer was tortured and killed by guerrillas. Leslie Baldwin and Willy Ludley, two members of the embassy staff, were suspected of having betrayed him - and when Ludley fled he was assumed to be guilty. Twenty years later he is living with his wife Priss (although he's not a prissy person) in the south of France, and Baldwin is due for promotion. But because Baldwin's innocence was never absolutely proved, the Foreign Office decide to re-open their investigations. They send Simon Milson, an old school friend of Ludley's, to discover the whole truth.

"The Villa Golitsyn is Ludley's house in Nice, where the bulk of the story is set. In summary, the plot sounds like a Famous Five adventure peopled by drunks and sexual frustrations: Ludley is a soak, Priss will only tease Milson, and the other two guests (a runaway schoolgirl, Helen, and another school friend of Ludley's, Charlie) form a horworsp that sozzled hot. But Piers Paul Read tries to dignify the extravagant element in his novel by drawing a number of parallels between his various worlds. As Milson tries to understand the secret of Ludley's past, issues raised by remote historical events are reflected in contemporary personal crises. The original question - how could Ludley behave so uncharacteristically as to betray a friend? - is mirrored in Milson's own worry about the rights and wrongs of seducing Priss, and in his wondering how youthful radicalism and energy can decline into middle-aged, boozy disillusionment. It is, in other words, the question of transformation that bothers him:

How then had it happened, Simon asked himself, that someone who had inspired such trust - whom once he would have followed into Hell itself - had changed from a hero into a drunk? The only one of his generation to have believed that a man must shape his destiny by the exercise of his will, he was now like the garbled root of a great tree carried down by the river Var, left stranded on the story beach of the Baie des Anges.

For Milson to be so surprised by the dramatic change in Ludley people that he will not credit people

The deities of coincidence

By Alan Brownjohn

P. H. NEWBY:
Feelings Have Changed
266pp. Faber. £6.95.
0 571 11823 2

As he pitches weirdly into view on the first page of *Feelings Have Changed*, a man with an odd wit and a whimsically peculiar name, Brock Common (short for Brock-ridge) seems a more than usually strange addition to the gallery of Newby anti-heroes. They are a breed admittedly strong on eccentricity (of a kind felt more than exhibited), customarily decent in behaviour, often vulnerable (though often resilient as well), and more often the victims of time or place than the masters. They have not always made the best of what they had, and disorientation is their characteristic affliction in a world which will not wait for them. But Brock Common's world looks more disordered still, as he rolls on - pursued by tribes of trackers? - through an outlandish tract of South Coast England, towards the home of his estranged wife, Becky, and his son, Frederick. In fact, he is pursued by nothing more than coincidence; and he is a

perfectly rational BBC producer, in the last days of the radio Features Department. The trouble is that he has had to settle for failure, as an artist and as a male, and try to accept it with refresh instead of protest: mental contortions, therefore, not the sheer physical oddities which the opening of the book appears to promise.

We are soon deeply immersed in the real world of London in 1963, but not before Brock has experienced the first and most important of a series of coincidences which are to manoeuvre him into a wry acquiescence in another kind of life. This coincidence is the appearance of Max Kettle, a National Service acquaintance of several years before, who is about to cast the ashes of his dead son into the waters of the harbour by which Brock is standing. The priest Father Drew and Mrs Kettle are in attendance, and Brock is asked to join them. Coincidence follows Brock back to London after this meagre, beautifully achieved scene, and into Broadcasting House, where Kettle deposits a script on a subject of which Brock has himself made a passion: the American Civil War. Coincidence nudges Brock and Kettle and their wives into an uncomfortable quartet, the impotent Kettle gaining solace for his bereavement from the company of Brock's son,

and Brock gaining sex from Kettle's wife, Jill. Coincidence ensures that the four of them are left at the end in a neat rearrangement of roles, with Brock resigned from the BBC and vainly trying to hack out a passable script of his own for someone else.

Coincidence, indeed, dispenses more often and more successfully in this novel than any character proposes; and it is linked, in some scenes in Upper Egypt, with the goddess Ma'at, who stands for the rightness of all things, whether they are good or evil (or if you like, fear facing facts). Yet coincidence manages never to seem mechanical, or glibly portentous, in Mr Newby's intricate and densely-textured story. It still looks fresher, and feels more surprising, that what Louis MacNeice describes as "dog-eared chance". It is a considerable feat to have avoided dancing this small though bizarre troupe of characters in patterns that might have been too schematic, or simply unbelievable. Coincidence, finally, remains a cleverly-presented fact and never degenerates into a device.

Nevertheless, both Louis MacNeice himself, and Laurence Gilliam, Head of the late and bitterly lamented Features Department at the BBC, are equally important presiding deities in *Feelings Have Changed*; and until their deaths dur-

ing the action of the novel they are living and talking presences in it. There is an awkwardness here, compounded by the sense that the book may partly be read as a tribute to both of them. The real men have had to be grafted, as large as life or even larger, onto the working existences of the fictitious, who are bound (Breck especially) to look duller as a result. Newby makes a prefatory assertion that he has written fiction, not "a novel about the politics of broadcasting". He has really tried to write two novels. *Feelings Have Changed* is an ingenious fable of predestination, stretching out to embrace a gentle satire on the defeat of the passionate and the gifted by the tedious and the ambitious, and failing to associate the themes in a satisfactory union. Unfortunately, the benevolent (or malign) coincidence intervenes to save Breck's or Laurence Gilliam's Features Department, which is despatched with considerable abruptness. It cannot. That was how it happened in life.

All the same, every thread in Newby's garment does make some kind of subtle connection with all the others, frequently in an unexpected and unobtrusive way; spotting the tiny links and catching the distant echoes is one of the many pleasures of a novel which is as carefully

woven as it is mordantly witty. And in avoiding contrivance Newby has also stepped aside from the path tempting him towards an easy, simplistic message. Even Father Drew, a crucial and symbolic priest who rides the harbour waters at the beginning, who turns up on the Thames and recurs on the Nile, and who is an arch-watcher and interpreter of coincidences, becomes a tentative upholder of doubt. Ultimately, at risk of sounding an agnostic, he is prepared to believe that the truth is found by those who create rather than those who believe. Feelings have indeed changed, he admits, if men and women are no longer ready to accept pain and evil as parts of a scheme of natural justice sanctioned by deities. Newby's "happy" ending, with everyone at least sorted out as their changed feelings - or their obscured inclinations - lead them, is therefore something which makes wry or gloomy or at best ambiguous, reading. But on its way to the frontiers of these last pages, this witty and illuminating novel has moved through a succession of scenes, by turns chilling, or poignant, or exuberantly farcical, and presented a series of credibly alarming characters, whose shifts and changes should make any reader ponder how human lives and motives might ever be assumed to be fixed and comprehensible.

Desperate liaisons

By Paul Bailey

BRIAN MOORE:
The Temptation of Eileen Hughes
211pp. Cape. £6.50.
0 224 01936 8

Eileen Hughes is a pretty young woman of limited intelligence who lives with her ailing mother in a small terrace house in Lismore in Northern Ireland. She is taken on as a shop assistant in the town's largest department store, where she is befriended by the owner's wife, Mona McAuley. Eileen becomes Mona's pet, and discovers that there are people who need never worry about money. Chief among these is Mona's husband, Bernard, a seemingly self-possessed man in his early thirties. He befriends Eileen, too, and encourages his wife to bring the girl out, to advise her on clothes and make-up, to smooth her path into the Good Life.

Such a bare résumé of the plot of *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* makes the book sound like a rag-trick novel. The opening pages tempt the reader into thinking that he or she is being led into familiar fictional territory: Simple Girl at the mercy of worldly Couple escapes from their Jaded Clutches in the Nick of Time. But further investigation reveals that Eileen is not so simple and that the worldly couple aren't so sophisticated after all. It is typical of Brian Moore's honesty that he should acknowledge that, superficially at least, there are certain resemblances to those described in the pages of women's magazines: life, unfortunately, has a nasty habit of imitating pulp fiction. Bernard, Mona and the bewildered Eileen are put through paces far more complex than any dreamed up by the fatigued imaginations of Fanny Hurst or Ethel M. Dell. From page fifty-two onwards, the novel moves on to an altogether more adventurous plane, and it remains there until the terrible story is finally told.

Since what happens to the luckless trio is both unusual and surprising, the reviewer of *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* has to practise the kind of restraint exhibited in the criticism of thrillers; he mustn't give the game away. Each one of the book's three principal characters is changed utterly by his experience of visiting London for a week in August - in Bernard's case, tragically so. His obsession with Eileen is shown to be neither sexual nor philanthropic in

origin, and Brian Moore accounts for its extraordinary nature in the most ordinary language. Such matter-of-factness in the face of the bizarre is indicative of Moore's skill as a narrator: what happens to Bernard, he implies, could happen to any desperate man who has lost faith in God and in himself as well. Bernard's misery - and it is nothing less than that - is presented boldly, without a hint of authorial intrusion. His anguish is as unstoppable as Judith Hearn's and as memorably described. It is a hallmark of Brian Moore's art that it respects and acknowledges a state of unhappiness as raw and as ugly as an open wound.

The Temptation of Eileen Hughes, which at first glance looks so unpromising, belongs with the best of Brian Moore's novels. I can't think of another living male novelist who writes about women with such sympathy and understanding. There isn't even the slightest trace of misogyny in his portraits of Mary Dunne and Judith Hearn and, in this book, of Mona McAuley. At first, Mona seems like one of those overbearing, omnipresent nymphomaniacs so beloved of Harold Robbins and Jackie Collins, yet it isn't long before one discovers that her hand of picking up attractive young men in hotel lobbies has its roots in rejection and loneliness: Mona "civilised" Bernard because it was called a "civilised" arrangement. It is with Eileen herself, however, that Moore excels. It is extremely difficult to write about the not particularly intelligent without either ridiculing or patronizing them, but Moore contrives to present Eileen with complete empathy. Her upsetting ordinariness is brilliantly done: her banal aspirations are accounted for with the same respect that is afforded Bernard's hopelessness. It isn't fashionable to praise novelists for their tact, but it is that very quality in Brian Moore's writing that deserves to be shared and is a measure of his intelligence and his humanity that he refuses to let judgment on his characters. It is, as far as I am concerned, an honourable and a considerable measure.

The cryptographical contribution

By John Keegan

F. H. HINSLEY (with E. E. THOMAS, C. F. G. RANSOM and R. C. KNIGHT):
British Intelligence in the Second World War
Its Influence on Strategy and Operations
Volume 2
800pp. HMSO. £15.95.
0 11 630934 2

Smiley arrived in Hamburg in mid-morning and took the airport bus to the city centre. . . . The din of the city hit him like a fire storm, causing him to forget the cold. Germany was his second nature, even his second soul. In his youth her literature had been his passion and his discipline. He could put on her language like a uniform and speak with its boldness. Yet he sensed danger in every step, for Smiley was a young man had spent half the war here in the lonely terror of the spy . . .

The game's afoot. And the reader is on Smiley's heels as they hurry both away into the half-light of the Le Carré labyrinth, paved with the headstems of forgotten victims of state, peeped with the louches, the leprous, the compromised, the semi-criminal, the ethnically of extinguished racial minorities, the have-beens of demobilized departments of deception, smear and sabotage. The air crackles with the inept transmissions of ill-trained telegraphists labouring at Morse keys under the raft of hangar doors, the streets echo with the footfalls of doomed couriers hastening to blown dead-letter drops, every stairwell creaks under the boots of the men in grey leather coats climbing to that rendezvous which will end inexorably in sro-lights, metal tables and the insistent sibilance of an insatiable interrogator. You may not understand

the plot. But the authenticity is irreproachable.

Or it is as far as line 8 of p 125 of the second volume of Professor Hinsley's official history of British Intelligence in the Second World War, when with the revelatory force of a detail of fuzzy air-photograph suddenly peeping into focus, the words "Even had it been practicable to maintain agents in Germany" swim out of the print. In my, I'll bet that again. "Even had it been practicable to maintain agents in Germany". Yes, that is what it says. No preliminary warning. No subsequent explanation. But the bald admission, none the less, that SIS (Glossary: Special or Secret Intelligence Service) had not a single agent in Belgium (p 249) and "contacts" in France (same page); it had agents in the German battleship anchorage in Norway (p 203), though it took fifteen months to establish them; it had a centre in North Africa, which "yielded little" (p 292); it made use of widespread Polish, Czech and French networks and it had its own in Switzerland; but, though the Germans certainly had agents in Britain during the war (cf Masterman), SIS (or, for variety's sake, MI6) apparently did not reciprocate.

Perhaps - in Le Carré's world we could be sure of it - this is a cover story. But the tone of the work argues against the notion, which is in any case heavily undermined by what we were told in Volume 1. There it was made clear that the German victories of 1940 devastated the SIS networks, to such effect that the organization had to fight for its credibility in the months which followed. The details of the infighting were related so copiously that an unpublished review by a post-war C

(head of SIS), Sir Maurice Oldfield, is alleged to have begun, "This is a book by a committee about committees for committees". And it is unquestionably the case that a course in Le Carré (particularly *The Looking-Glass War*) was almost a prerequisite for following the ebb and flow of relationships between SIS, MI5 (counter-espionage), the service intelligence organizations (MI, MI and MI and Special Operations Executive), the war-based sabotage organization which was C.S. (the *noir*). The atmosphere of intelligence was indeed made to seem primarily "a medium for the exchange of male hatreds" and, though the emotion was not as intense as in Germany, where it is said that twelve agencies competed for the Führer's ear, was strong enough to threaten the efficient evaluation of "product". Volume 2 carries the story on. In March 1943 we find MI5 arguing for an amalgamation of SIS, SOE and itself, presumably under its own charge, a campaign eventually scotched by the Prime Minister himself. "Every department", he wrote, in words Mrs Thatcher may have taken for her text, "which has waxed during the war is now considering how it can quarter its officials on the public indefinitely when peace returns. The less we encourage these illusions the better." They were still flourishing, however, at the end of the year and we must await Volume 3 for the conclusion of this story - and, as a series of tantalizing footnotes advises us - for a number of others.

But the substance of the narrative does not derive from the success (or failure) of "hunting" intelligence. Volume 1 established that "Signal Intelligence" (SIGINT) yielded the overwhelming bulk of strategic and tactical information by which the war was directed, and it identified the

Government Code and Cypher School, located at Bletchley Park, as the source from which the product flowed. Code and cypher are the two media by which the sense of messages may be concealed from an unwanted listener. Interchangeable in the popular understanding, they are essentially different. The first works by reference to a code-book, in which words and phrases are assigned another form, commonly a set of figures. The second works by substituting for each letter either another letter or a figure. Code may be complicated by "super-encipherment" and cyphers may make use of code forms. In either case, each may be read only with a key. Used once, a key ensures security. But the practical difficulties of distributing end synchronizing the use of "one-time pads" oblige senders to include in messages a reference to the key by which it may be deciphered. It may be an alphabetical or mathematical irregularity, which is easily detected. It may be an indication of how the figures of the cypher or superencipherment have been irregularly jumbled. If the indication can be cracked, or if the wording of the message can be successfully guessed, it then becomes possible - given a sufficient quantity of the intercepted material - to reconstruct the code-book or establish the mathematical basis of the cypher.

Bletchley's triumph - much assisted by the work of the Polish intelligence service - was to reconstruct the machine (Enigma) with which the German services jumbled their encipherments and then, via intercepted traffic, to determine the character of the different keys used on it, together with their daily variations. Over two hundred keys were identified altogether and by mid-1943, when this volume concludes, sixty had been broken. They are

listed in Appendices 4 and 5, which should be read before tackling the text (the latter appendix has a prudent interest, since it touches the extent of Allied knowledge of the concentration camp secret). The Luftwaffe, newest of the services and most subject to sudden and unsettling relocation of its units, most frequently made the mistakes which let the Bletchley Park cryptographers into the encipherment. The army, which had readier access to land-lines, yielded a smaller body of insecure material and its Greenbank key, used between home headquarters, was broken only thirteen times during the war; one supposes that its operators were the sort of old faithfuls whose length of service kept them safe from duty at the front. The navy's record was intermediate. Its commerce raider (Pike) keys were never broken; its U-boat (Shark) key resisted for most of 1942 and then broke, at the most crucial of moments, for the winning of the Battle of the Atlantic, in December.

Volume 1 familiarized us with the dimensions of Bletchley's output, codenamed Ultra (though enciphered always Bonifida, an early cover word, for the Prime Minister). Volume 2 introduces us to the importance of Ultra's ancillary, the Y service. Y is the interception, analysis and decryption of "low-grade" traffic, that between airfields and aircraft or divisions and battalions. Its amassing is laborious as its constituent items mundane, but, if properly organized, it will yield tactical information of the greatest value. Because it operates close to the enemy's front, Y's time-lag is short and his intentions may be detected and countered sometimes before they are implemented. Thus on November 2, 1942, at the crisis of the battle of Alamcin, Y intercepted

Revenge of the innocent

By William Boyd

MOLLY KEANE:
Good Behaviour
245pp. Andre Deutsch. £6.50.
0 233 97332 X

Irish history in the first two or three decades of this century has proved a fertile ground for novelists. Notable among those who have successfully exploited it are Jennifer Johnston and J. G. Farrell. Molly Keane's new novel (the previous eleven were written under the pseudonym M. J. Farrell) joins this fairly select and demanding company. *Good Behaviour* concentrates, as did *The Old Jest* and *Troubles*, on the upper classes and landed gentry, but in Keane's novel, unlike these, the political upheavals of the time play no significant part.

The novel opens in the recent past. Aroon St Charles, the narrator, is nursing her dying mother. While she is feeding her one lunchtime, her mother chokes, vomits and dies. This prompts a hostile outbreak from an old family servant, Rose. Other deaths are mentioned, events in the past referred to, and Aroon's culpability in connection with certain evils is mysteriously invoked.

Aroon seems unmoved by these accusations, though Rose's angry words do encourage her to re-examine her early life. With chapter two we enter a prolonged flashback that takes us to the end of the novel, as Aroon reconstructs her own history from her earliest years to young adulthood.

We learn of her childhood at Temple Alice, the family seat, of her

beloved elder brother Hubert, her dashing sportsman father and her elegant artistic mother. This idyll is interrupted, however, by a succession of tragedies. First, a favourite governess is sacked and disappears. Her body is washed up along the coast a few days later. Aroon grows up into an ungainly, heavily-breasted girl (Hubert, the apple of his father's eye, is lean and athletic). Then, in the First World War, Aroon's father is wounded and has a leg amputated. One summer Hubert brings Richard, a university friend, to stay. The three young people go for walks and picnics together. One night Richard slips into bed beside Aroon but does nothing more than lay his head on her breast. This, however, is quite sufficient for Aroon. She sees it as a declaration of love and harbours similar passionate feelings for Richard.

The pace of tragedy quickens: Hubert is killed in a car accident while driving with Richard; Aroon's father, the Major, takes to drink and shortly afterwards suffers a stroke which renders him a bed-ridden near-vegetable. Family life begins to collapse. The mother can't manage the innumerable household accounts and soon the atmosphere at Temple Alice becomes strained and impoverished. Rose, the faithful servant, takes over the nursing of the Major, plying him with whiskey and assiduously warning his nervous feet beneath the blankets with her bare hands. Aroon scornfully rejects the advances of the family solicitor and is then shattered to learn of Richard's engagement. Eventually the Major dies and Aroon faces her joyless future, compelled to live in a hostile environment dominated by her uncaring mother and Rose with their hateful mingling. But suddenly the

balance of power shifts when the Major's will is read out. Everything - the house, the estate - has been left to Aroon.

This, in fact, is only Aroon's side of the story. Molly Keane has presented us with a near faultless exercise in the technique known as unreliable narration. Aroon is a classic unreliable narrator of the innocent rather than the knowing sort. She knows nothing of what has really been going on, and certainly she knows far less than the reader who can construct an alternative or parallel history to supplement Aroon's hopelessly naive version. For in fact the Major is a philanderer, his wife frigid and unloving. The governess who committed suicide had been seduced by him. Furthermore, Hubert is homosexual; Richard is his lover, and the bedroom escapade was a ploy to dispel the Major's suspicions. Richard has never loved Aroon. The Major busily services every compliant female - including Rose - in the neighbourhood. After his stroke it's not just whiskey that Rose administers: the hand beneath the blankets is providing a more crucial therapy than restoring circulation.

There is an implicit sequel to the novel, covering the period from the Major's death to his wife's, many years later. It's instructive to re-read the first chapter in the light of all this information. Those "scarce" marks and mysterious allusions refer to several decades of Aroon's meticulously exacted revenge. "All my life," she asserts at the beginning of the book.

I have done everything for the best reasons and the most unselfish motives. I have lived for the people dear to me, and I am at a loss to know why their lives have been at times so perplexingly unhappy.

It's only when the reader returns to these words that the thoroughgoing malice shines through the gossamer pose.

Good Behaviour is an absorbing and elegantly written portrayal of dangerous innocence, hypocrisy and wilful self-deception. It's further enlivened by an affectionate and exact recall for its period; even if this is sometimes a little too lovingly laid on. It displays a remarkable technical virtuosity, subtly entangling the reader to contribute to and interpret the novel. The unreliable narrator falters rarely (Aroon refers to events in her father's affairs in England - and feelings which she couldn't know about) but these are minor flaws in a most rewarding novel. A worthy candidate on the Booker shortlist.

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at 0910 orders for 21st Panzer Division to counter-attack, allowing Eighth Army headquarters to organize a riposte by XXX Corps by 1000. Ultra, which Y always challenged itself to beat, had had the information at 0700 but did not get it to the front until after 21st Panzer had begun to move. Y's achievements were supplemented by those of PR (photographic reconnaissance), DF (direction finding), Traffic Analysis, which established the enemy's signal procedures, and TINA, which identifies the "fist" of individual Morse senders. TINA, as Patrick Beesley's *Very Special Intelligence* revealed, sometimes pinpointed the position of a particular U-boat even when Blechley was not breaking the Enigma key, because the owner of a familiar "fist" was known to be aboard.

"Intelligence is rarely dramatic", wrote Rowley Scott-Francis, head of RAF in the Middle East. The best results obtained from the continuous study of details. Volume 1 told how the pathetically under-equipped and understaffed intelligence services won the men and machines to begin studying the details. Volume 2 relates the stages by which the various services (SIS and SOE excepted) were brought under a single authority and their outputs integrated. When they were - when, for example, DF was pinpointing

transmission centres, Traffic Analysis mapping the distinctive star-shaped layout of a divisional network, TINA perhaps identifying an old friend at headquarters, PR bringing back pictures of new petrol dumps, and Enigma breaking messages from Berlin containing an unfamiliar operational cover word - the enemy's intentions could be forestalled with almost eerie precision. So they were by Eighth Army in early July, 1942, allowing Auchinleck to fight the first battle of Alamein with the confidence that he had his forces in the right place - and, as a by-blow to victory, to destroy most of *Nachrichtenabteilung* 621, Rommel's Y organization.

The influence of intelligence on operations in the Western Desert and North Africa occupies a great deal of this volume. Rommel's reputation is thereby further enhanced. Time and again the authors emphasize the general point, made by every other rational writer on the subject of intelligence, that foreknowledge is no guarantee of victory. Their analysis of the course of the Gazala battle, in May 1942, amply bears it out. Both Y and, to a lesser extent Ultra (not yet integrated - a mistake soon corrected) gave warning of Rommel's attack. Even so, the right dispositions were not adopted; but, while that could be and was retrieved, what could not have been allowed for was Rommel's almost insane recklessness during the course of the battle. Surrounded and short of supplies, he might have been expected to attempt retreat. Instead ("mon centre cède, ma droite recule, situation excellente"), he attacked and won the day.

Rommel's extraordinary tactical flair is all the explanation needed for Montgomery's extreme caution in dealing with him during Alamein and after. The field-marshal's professional critics will mine this volume for further proof of his "stickiness" and they will not go away empty-handed. They will also be able to feed their distaste for the "egotism" and "arrogance" alleged against him by the envious and the bruised. He certainly caused widespread irritation by the manner in which he treated Ultra came to him through second sight rather than Blechley. But his use of the material cannot really be faulted. His overriding duty in November and December, 1942, was to win the greatest possible victory at the least possible risk and that he achieved. He would not have been forgiven any setbacks into which Ultra's exposition of a chance for a quick kill might have tempted him.

The very full discussion of the Tunisian stage of the North African war will most interest experts in that bitter but footnote campaign. Those who seek fuller explanation of how the Japanese came so wholly to surprise the British in Malaya, a far more important episode, will be disappointed. Blameworthy as Percival

and his staff of sleepheads appear to remain, they were not helped by London, whose assessments were dilatory and inept. The air campaign against Germany, on the other hand, which lay at the heart of British strategy, is copiously analysed. Webster and Frankland have already bored the bones of the sorry story: that in 1941 Bomber Command lost more air crew over Germany than it killed Germans, and that in 1942, during a typical two-month period, sixty per cent of aircraft dropped their bombs more than five miles from the target. The Luftwaffe, with only two hundred bombers in the west, was achieving far more, simply by obliging the British to keep 1,400 fighters at home as a precautionary measure. In this misbalance of effort the Ministry of Economic Warfare was much to be blamed. Until the beginning of 1943 it consistently overestimated the effect of bombing on the German economy, sometimes as much as twentyfold; and its forecasts of German economic performance in general were calculated with an abandon which makes George Brown's Department of Economic Affairs appear a temple of the wise virgins. In June 1942, when one and a half million potential munition workers still served as maids in German households, MEW advised that "Germany's economic resources are wholly mobilized and wholly engaged". Made more cautious by the spring of 1943, perhaps by the success of the U-boats in the battle of the Atlantic, it was still forecasting that Germany's war potential would continue to decline - and that at a moment when Speer's reorganization of production was about to lead to a phenomenal acceleration in the output of every category of weapon. Almost all that can be said by way of exculpation of the economists' over-optimism is that it was exceeded by the expectations, bold most invincibly by the Prime Minister, of what Resistance could achieve.

As a story of the interplay of one intelligence organization and another, nothing in Volume 2 exceeds in interest that of Naval Intelligence Division's war with the *Beobachtungsdienst*. It is, for one thing, particularly well told, so that the narrative of the sea battles, intrinsically more difficult to write than that of land battles, as anyone who has tried knows, are the clearest in the book. But it has to do also with the very great success of the Germans in Blechley's British. For reasons of convenience, which the authors roundly condemn, the Admiralty did not adopt the other services' machine encipherment but clung to codes superenciphered. The mathematics of several were broken early by the B-Dienst, yielding successes which the Admiralty explained by extraneous factors (the psychology of insecurity is one of the most intriguing sub-plots in the book: while the Admiralty put breaks down to German retrieval of codes from

sunken ships, the Germans commonly ascribed them to Italian duplicity or incompetence - a particularly cruel libel, since Italian naval ciphers proved unbreakable - or to the supposed activities of SIS).

The B-Dienst's most important success was in reading *Nachricht* Cypher No 3, used to fight the battle of the Atlantic, from February 1942 until June 1943. Occasionally it lost the key, but from February 1943, when the U-boats trembled on the edge of victory, it was sometimes decrypting convoy movement signals ten to twenty hours in advance. It was a crowning mercy that Blechley had broken the U-boat Enigma key, Shark, in December and was thus reading the orders moving U-boats to points of interception. Not always in time, however, to order a safe re-routing (which the Germans might in any case succeed in reading); moreover, so numerous had the U-boats become by early 1943 that the length of their patrol lines in itself sometimes enough to ensure contact with convoys. In this respect, the tactics of the battle of the Atlantic differed little from those of Nelson in the Mediterranean during 1798. As a result, it was other factors, of a cruder military significance, which eventually tipped the balance. One was ship-borne radar, which detected U-boats when they surfaced to attack (oh, that submarines still had to); it allowed the American escorts of Convoy UGS 6 to bring its forty ships through a running battle with twenty U-boats between March 12 and 19, 1943, for the loss of only four. Another was the arrival of escort aircraft carriers in numbers which made the immediate environs of a convoy impenetrable to surfaced U-boats. The clincher was the closing of the "air-gap" in mid-Atlantic, which disappeared when new long-range patrol aircraft from Britain and America could meet at the half-way point. No U-boat was then safe for long on the surface. And a permanently submerged U-boat was not an effective weapon of war. It frustrated acceptance of that fact, Dönitz withdrew his wolf-packs from the Atlantic in May, 1943.

It is testimony to the scrupulous objectivity of the authors that all this evidence is laid before the reader at the appropriate point, and that not a whit more is claimed for Ultra, or any other agency of intelligence, than the facts can stand. And scholarship is but one of the book's many virtues. Its index is even better than the first volume's, its appendices more luxurious, its footnotes, at the bottom of the page, as copious as the text. A little less than 100,000 words to find as a break into a Barracuda cypher. Its refusal to name names, even when available elsewhere, remains an irritation and the authors might have anticipated the bibliography they promise for Volume 3 by citing a few titles which are an essential commentary to the Ultra story, notably Peter Calvocoressi's and Aileen Clayton's memoirs of their war work. But almost anything can be forgiven a production which provides fold-out maps.

And yet the sensation with which one leaves the book is one of depression. For it provides, in its own way, a sort of key to the character of Britain's part in the Second World War. In a throw-away line on p.258, the authors consider the argument that in mid-1941 "naval blockade, such subversion as SOE might accomplish and the bomber had become Great Britain's only offensive weapons". At a comparable point in the First World War, the country had the largest navy in the world, had just created the world's largest army and was on the way to building the largest air force. Heaven help that military power should ever be the index of a nation's worth. But, if British history in the twentieth century is a chronicle of decline, then the Ultra story goes to reinforce it. On the one hand, it allows us to see what was really important to Whitehall during 1941-43, the answer being the convoy battles first, the defence of the United Kingdom, second, bombing third and desert warfare a good way fourth - an almost wholly defensive commitment and an embarrassingly tiny effort for a country which had begun the war with a GNP only a third smaller than Germany's. On the other, it partakes of that intellectual self-congratulation by which the swiftness of the Ultra story against the blood. We may not have fielded as many divisions as the Russians, or built as many tanks as the Americans, its message seems to go, but when it came to brains . . .

Yet there was no monopoly of brains. The Russians, if insecure with many of their cyphers, ran a number of espionage networks which, even allowing for the extravagance of legend, supplied very high-grade intelligence directly to the Kremlin. The Americans broke the Japanese Enigma apparently on their own and, in the Magic organization, had a system closely similar to Ultra. Its output was instrumental to the winning of Midway which reversed the whole course of the war in the Pacific. William Friedman, the genius of their cryptanalytic service, is widely regarded as the greatest cryptanalyst who ever lived. But neutral Sweden ran, in Arne Beutling, one who ran him close. It was he who succeeded in breaking the ten-wheel *Gehemtschreiber* cyphers, regarded by Blechley as the most serious challenge it faced in the war. And it was his crypts, transmitted here via the British naval attaché in Stockholm, which the Naval Intelligence Division so highly valued for keeping track of the German surface fleet. A little less hubris would all well might have the telling of the Enigma story - at least by others. Professor Hinsley has struck exactly the right key.

Yes, it is correct that Schink's mother applied in 1952 for the compensation available to the next-of-kin of people persecuted by the Nazi regime. Yes, the case did take rather a long time to adjudicate, because the Gestapo files were needed for another case which was given priority. Yes, after ten years his mother was formally notified that Schink could not be recognized as a political victim of Nazi persecution in the sense of the Compensation Law, and this did mean that the authorities in 1962 thought that he had just been a violent delinquent; it was not their job to make that kind of judgment, only to decide whether persecution had been clearly political. The evidence was inadequate. It was mostly the evidence of Gestapo records from 1944, and . . . no, the compensation officials did not automatically adopt the Gestapo's (self-interested and mendacious) view that Schink's gang belonged to the criminal underworld, but they were not convinced of the contrary. Yes, there is now more evidence that Schink and his band of Edelweiss Pirates, as they called themselves, did have political motives for repeatedly attacking groups of uniformed Hitler Youth; for giving assistance to Jews, deserters from the German Army and Russian slave labourers who fled from their barracks; for assassinating the Nazi party boss of their corner of the Cologne suburb of Ehrenfeld; for launching a heavily armed attack on the police station where a girl communist was imprisoned; for being on the verge of blowing the local Gestapo headquarters into the sky with TNT, when they were caught and tortured until they confessed.

Yes, there is more evidence, but it is not possible to re-open the case because the Compensation Law laid down that all applications had to be filed by December 31, 1959. Schink's mother had died in the meantime, so an application by his sister would be a new application - it is too late, and anyway, only parents and children are allowed to make such applications. respect of their public motives, he insists on the primacy of a simple youthful hatred of regimentation, a straightforward hatred of cruel injustice, and the generation of an intense group solidarity. This is compelling. It is possible, too, that they really did overcome their inhibitions about killing by reasoning that the Nazis would kill them, whether or not they killed first - a sound, practical moral judgment in 1944. However, their movement to this point, to the (very simple) acquisition and use, in their last months at large, of revolvers, bazookas and TNT is presented in a mechanical and sketchy way which at times veiges on the apologetic.

Theft was not only an adventure for this kind of gang, of which there were some thirty in the Rhine-Ruhr area by late 1944 - in a system in which every necessity of life was administered, it

Edelweiss and infamy

By Tim Mason

ALEXANDER GOEB:

Er war sechzehn als man ihn hängte
Das kurze Leben des Widerstands-
kämpfers Bartholomäus Schink
159pp. Hamburg, Rowholt DMS, 80
3 499 14768 8

For compelling reasons the Federal Republic of Germany is a state founded upon and dedicated to the rule of law: the Third Reich, it is held, was above all a lawless state. The nature of modern states, however, (also the nature of positive law) is such that this ambition is not easy to sustain. In fact, the more diligently and thoroughly a state enforces the rule of law, the less its legal administration appears to be just, or even sensible. Surreal absurdities are perpetrated and perfectly explained in the name of judicial precision. What is more, the dedication of the state to the perfect rule of law encourages both rulers and ruled to believe that every conceivable problem must have a judicial solution - what is the rule of law worth if its reach is limited?

Alexander Goeb's brief imaginative reconstruction of the life of a German boy, publicly hanged at the age of sixteen on November 10, 1944, for armed resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, contains as an appendix the verbatim record of the author's confrontation last year with the civil servant in charge of the "compensation" department of the Interior administration of the district of Cologne. Was Bartholomäus Schink a hero of the anti-Nazi resistance, or was he an adolescent gangster? Who can decide this? Like all serious West German civil servants, Dr Dette is omniscient. (He is also very patient - perhaps because he sympathizes with the impassioned advocate of the dead boy, perhaps because he knows that he should not give any offence, for the case has aroused great public interest. We do not know why, for civil servants do not have opinions, at least not during working hours, since that would be incompatible with the rule of law.)

Yes, it is correct that Schink's mother applied in 1952 for the compensation available to the next-of-kin of people persecuted by the Nazi regime. Yes, the case did take rather a long time to adjudicate, because the Gestapo files were needed for another case which was given priority. Yes, after ten years his mother was formally notified that Schink could not be recognized as a political victim of Nazi persecution in the sense of the Compensation Law, and this did mean that the authorities in 1962 thought that he had just been a violent delinquent; it was not their job to make that kind of judgment, only to decide whether persecution had been clearly political. The evidence was inadequate. It was mostly the evidence of Gestapo records from 1944, and . . . no, the compensation officials did not automatically adopt the Gestapo's (self-interested and mendacious) view that Schink's gang belonged to the criminal underworld, but they were not convinced of the contrary. Yes, there is now more evidence that Schink and his band of Edelweiss Pirates, as they called themselves, did have political motives for repeatedly attacking groups of uniformed Hitler Youth; for giving assistance to Jews, deserters from the German Army and Russian slave labourers who fled from their barracks; for assassinating the Nazi party boss of their corner of the Cologne suburb of Ehrenfeld; for launching a heavily armed attack on the police station where a girl communist was imprisoned; for being on the verge of blowing the local Gestapo headquarters into the sky with TNT, when they were caught and tortured until they confessed.

Yes, there is more evidence, but it is not possible to re-open the case because the Compensation Law laid down that all applications had to be filed by December 31, 1959. Schink's mother had died in the meantime, so an application by his sister would be a new application - it is too late, and anyway, only parents and children are

allowed to make such applications. not brothers and sisters. No, there is no point in the sister saying that she doesn't care about the money: giving financial compensation is what this office is here for. It is not here to make declarations about the personal character, or political or legal status of people killed by the Gestapo.

It seems that public attention was first drawn to this extraordinary story in 1969, when messages, scratched in the plaster, were found on the cellar walls of a building which was by then a pensions office: "Edelweiss Pirates are loyal". "When no one is thinking of you, your mother is"; and, from one of the gang's songs, "Children must come for the war/Wheels must roll for the victory/Heads must roll after the war". The cellar had been the Gestapo bunker in Ehrenfeld, the last abode of resistance fighters, before they

reconstructed the life of a German boy, publicly hanged at the age of sixteen on November 10, 1944, for armed resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, contains as an appendix the verbatim record of the author's confrontation last year with the civil servant in charge of the "compensation" department of the Interior administration of the district of Cologne. Was Bartholomäus Schink a hero of the anti-Nazi resistance, or was he an adolescent gangster? Who can decide this? Like all serious West German civil servants, Dr Dette is omniscient. (He is also very patient - perhaps because he sympathizes with the impassioned advocate of the dead boy, perhaps because he knows that he should not give any offence, for the case has aroused great public interest. We do not know why, for civil servants do not have opinions, at least not during working hours, since that would be incompatible with the rule of law.)

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was a condition of the gang's existence, a main source of its identity, and the activity which, above all others, defined its public identity in Cologne-Ehrenfeld. Their attitudes to theft are not clarified in this book, not even fictionally. They hit upon one brilliant idea - the theft of ration cards, which could be given to the needy, as a much less problematic method of redistribution than the theft of food. But where they got their own regular supplies of cigarettes, beer, food and clothes (preferably tartan shirts and corduroy, which constituted an anti-uniform) from, who was deprived by their large-scale and long-term pilfering, is obscure. Ehrenfeld was a working- and lower-middle-class suburb, not wealthy. There is a moral issue here, which should not have been avoided by the author, however small it may seem against the backdrop of the institutionalized oppression, slaughter and destruction which was Cologne in the years 1942-44.

This issue is important less on its own account, than because of the two further objective problems of interpretation which it raises. First, how far was the gang actually propelled into insurrection by its thieves? Schink and his friends started stealing early on. (In this respect, their story was quite different from that of the fugitive slave labourers, with whom they often co-operated.) They knew that the penalties were quite ferocious and as "social discipline" crumbled amid the rubble, the regime became more and more terroristic, for it knew no other way to attempt to preserve its power. Police executions became the order of the day, and the gangs were indeed liable to execution before they began killing. Schink's gang was ac-

However, Goeb is careful not to present their seriousness as political in any precise or programmatic sense. In

the question is important secondly for an understanding of the public reaction to the gang, both at the time and in the conflicts over "rehabilitation". The direct expression of moral outrage against Nazism by the regime's German subjects was - unless the latter happened to be officers of the General Staff - always associated with actions which were narrowly criminal. Namely, that is, even before the regime re-wrote the criminal code in rubber ink. Acts of premeditated violence against persons or property, creating a riot or sabotaging production were difficult things for precisely those people to do who had a basic commitment to decency and humane standards of conduct - and who were for this reason opponents of the regime. Most such people were trapped. The adult resistance organizations of the labour movement achieved victories of integrity, endurance and solidarity in their struggle; in the forms of their resistance activities they expressed exactly the standards of behaviour to which they were committed. They were, with very few exceptions, not capable of preparing to blow up a police station and its occupants. The Gestapo plausibly accused the gangs of the Cologne area (some of which included many adult Frenchmen and Poles) of twenty-nine murders; five of the dead were Nazi party officials, and six of them policemen, among whom was the head of the Gestapo for the whole city. Older Social Democrats were probably disconcerted by these "kids" who did not hesitate.

The young people, who seem to have been innocent of party politics, were not holding out for an opportunity to act politically. They had both the ardour and the need to establish a public presence, to live expressively and openly beyond the law - with their emblems, distinctive dress, guitar music and slang. They had the urgency necessary to base their perilous independence upon theft, to aid the victims and kill the persecutors, now. Respectable a-political people in the suburb were probably less disconcerted than incensed and alarmed - the public hanging of Schink and his comrades was well attended. The specific forms of their resistance, arguably the only forms available to the man or woman in the German rubble, were not such as to win them many friends among the remaining citizens of Ehrenfeld (who were mostly women and old men). For this reason the gangs could not develop into a popular army of liberation.

A parallel confusion or uncertainty of judgment persisted after the war, both among German politicians and administrators and among historians (myself included). Anti-social, criminal, politically on the left . . . The catalogue of the 1974 Cologne exhibition still hovered in its interpretation of the gangs. Detlev Peukert and other young German historians are currently demonstrating (after the pioneering essay by Daniel Horn in the *Journal of Social History*, 1973), that this was the wrong kind of uncertainty to entertain about that kind of resistance. They are employing a scholarly rigour which Goeb chose to eschew. The only appropriate uncertainty is one about the verifiable facts.

Goeb begins, more or less, with Schink aged ten, seeing his Jewish brother beaten to death in the street during the pogrom of November 9-10, 1938. This is probably a verified fact (from interviews with relatives and survivors). Goeb ends more or less with Gestapo officers stubbing out their cigarettes on Schink's back. This may be less exact, but it will do.



The pilot and co-pilot of a Wellington bomber - one of a group of students of RAF atrew in War Photographs 1939-45 by Cecil Beaton (191pp. Imperial War Museum/Jane's. £12.95. 0 7106 0136 0).

were killed or driven to suicide. Like most of those opponents of Nazi rule who had no formal organization (an underground party cell, or a church), the Edelweiss Pirates did not leave much evidence of their thoughts and intentions, only of the bare facts of their deeds. The words on the cellar walls were new evidence, dramatic rather than conclusive.

This has been a big problem for Goeb and the other protagonists of the rehabilitation of Schink and his some 200 comrades (156 of whom were arrested with him). There has been one bigger obstacle to their public recognition in West Germany (see below), but dearth of evidence is the major problem with this book, which is a sorrowful contribution to the campaign. The fragments of written sources and memories do not add up to a coherent story, except in the broadest outline. Goeb's long passages of imaginative reconstruction, which are not indicated as such, are a labour of simple devotion and advocacy. They are also silted and one-dimensional. Adults who in general doubt the capacity of teenagers to make strong moral and political judgments, are it is true, ignorant and prejudiced, but Goeb goes too far in the other direction. The young people are too nice. The fictional conversations of Schink and his friends are improbably heavy with purpose, and impossibly serious. The odd moments of lust for adventure and inventive high spirits which Goeb does allow them only make these passages grate the more.

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caused of fifty cases of breaking and entering. The role of theft in the dynamic of its political development can never be known, even approximately. It is lost in the ambiguities of youthful defiance and in the brutal summariness of the Gestapo's procedures. But it is the sort of open question which should be signalled as such. It was well identified in the large exhibition, "Resistance and Persecution in Cologne 1933-1945", presented by the city archive in 1974.

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The heavy metal

By Bryan Ranft

RONALD BASSETT:
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286pp. Macmillan, £9.95
0 355 28164 0
EDWIN P. HOYT:
Defeat at the Falklands
Germany's East Asia Squadron 1914
240pp. Robert Hale, £9.95
0 7051 8863 3

The naval history of the two World Wars seems to have an unending appeal to publishers and, presumably, readers. This has produced a genre of writing difficult to classify. It is certainly not authoritative history, although, at its best, it is based on wide reading in reputable secondary sources. It rarely quotes the authority for its statements and makes frequent use of quotation without attribution and, more dangerously, introduces into what is presented as history versions of the precise words and even inner reflections of its characters.

A lady of the moment

By Patrick O'Connor

CHRISTIANE ISSARTEL:
Les Dames aux Camélias
De l'histoire à la légende
173pp. Paris: Chêne/Hachette.
2 85108 274 4

No other nineteenth-century courtesan, in literature or in history, has enjoyed such uninterrupted fame and popularity as the Lady of the Camélias. In our own time this has been mostly due to La Traviata, but even without Verdi's genius the story has had a fascination far outweighing any other tale of unrequited or tragic love. It was among the ladies laughingly called "les Grândes Horizontales". Why should this story have held the attention so solidly when the others - Champfleury's Mariette, Méilac and Halévy's Frou-Frou, and even Murger's Minni Pinson (despite Puccini) - have been relegated to obscurity? The original notoriety of Dumas's novel arose from the Parisian public's curiosity about its central character who, not long dead, was still a well-remembered figure from "those theatres, cafés and parties at which the gentlemen of the day met the ladies of the moment".

The three Dames aux Camélias, who give this book its title, are the original model Marie Duplessis, Marguerite Gautier, the character in Dumas's novel and play, and Violetta Valéry, the heroine of La Traviata. Alphonsine Plessis, who took the name Marie in her chosen profession, was descended from the poverty-stricken seigneurs of Mesnil d'Argenteuil. Her début in the world of fashion is obscured by legends (such as the one that she was noticed by her first admirer eating a cornet of fried potatoes on the Pont-Neuf, whereupon he picked her up in his carriage) but by the age of seventeen she had become the mistress of a young vicomte at the Ministry of the Interior. She passed from one lover to another until at one point, according to Villemessant (the founder of Le Figaro), seven young men who had fallen in love with her wanted to form themselves into a society of admirers - one for each day of the week.

By the age of twenty-one she had already contracted the disease of which she was to die two years later, and at Spa she met the elderly Baron de Stackelberg, who paid her to give up prostitution because of the resemblance she bore to his deceased daughter. The demi-monde recalled her, however, and it was during the last months of her life that she enjoyed brief liaisons with Dumas fils, Franz Liszt and Count Edouard de Perregaux. She and Perregaux were married in London in February 1846, less than a year before her death, by which time they had already parted. That Perregaux, rather than Dumas fils himself, is the original model for Armand Duval seems fairly certain. Their separation seems to have come about because of quarrels and jealousy, whereas Dumas's father did persuade him to leave Marie, as in the story, for fear of his ruination - but surely also for fear of disease? Because tuberculosis is romanticized in *La Dame aux Camélias* and in Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, the fact has been obscured that what most of the unfortunate courtesans suffered from was not consumption but syphilis.

The narrator of Dumas's novel says in the prologue, "It will seem absurd to many people, but I have unbounded sympathy for women of this kind, and I do not think it necessary to apologize for such sympathy." The book takes the always attractive form of a narrative told to the author by a young friend as they sit by the fire. The first scene depicts their meeting after the sale of Marguerite's effects, and proceeds to the gruesome exhumation of her body so that Armand may gaze on her now rotting countenance for the last

time. The story which follows is therefore to be read with foreknowledge of the tragic ending. It is set in the small, candle-lit rooms of the 1840s; Marguerite's own apartment is modest compared with the opulent settings we have become used to on the operatic stage and she can open the window to shout across the courtyard to her confidante, Mme Prudence. The dramatized version simplifies the action to such an extent that hardly any changes needed to be made to turn it into an opera libretto.

It was the heroine's sufferings which fascinated Victorian audiences and her death which allowed them to sympathize with her. No one wanted to extend any charity towards courtesans like La Palva, who were clever enough to convert their jewels and carriages into stocks and bonds before age took away their clients. The key to the rôle of Marguerite is thus expressed in the famous line about the fallen woman being unable to resist herself whatever else she may be capable of. It was in this speech (which in *La Traviata* became the aria "Addio del passato") that Duse was said to have been at her greatest, whereas Bernhardt excelled in the scenes of frivolous sparkle, as well as in the death scene.

Christiane Issartel's book treats the subject in a romantic fashion, which is wholly suitable, and, although she neither goes deeply enough into its historical origins, nor does full justice to Dumas and his later interpreters, to whom she devotes the third part of her text, the attraction of *La Dame aux Camélias* remains intact. It would take a much longer book to chronicle all the actresses, singers and dancers who have performed in the rôle (there have been at least four ballets on the subject since the war, the most recent cruelly referred to by one of its detractors as "la triviale"), so naturally the author concentrates on her own favourites. As well as Duse and Bernhardt, these include Ida Rubinstein, Ludmilla Ptichif and Yvonne Printemps, but there is no Tallulah Bankhead and, a more serious omission, no Mary Garden.

It has now largely been forgotten that there was another opera based on Dumas's play. This was *Camille* by Hamilton Forrest, which Garden commissioned in 1924. Bernhardt's tour operator insisted that no audience in the United States would go to see the play unless it had this simplified title, which must have confused quite a few people as Camille is usually a boy's name and no character in the play bears it. Forrest had been an office-boy working for Samuel Insull, the Chicago Grand Opera's director, when Garden discovered him. Despite the publicity surrounding the first performance of an American opera, which was more of a rarity then than it is now, the libretto was in French. In her autobiography Garden commented, "It was a pretty dismal failure . . . I just wanted to give an American a chance, and I wanted an American 'grand opera'! It interested me greatly to do it but it didn't interest the public at all". She appeared in a red Etrope wig and made her farewell to Armand on the telephone rather than by letter. There were several other drastic modernizations of the old plot but the scene in the gambling-hell in which Armand insults Marguerite by hurling money at her, was as before. This scene is in the book, where the insult is credited to being more calculated. After a brief reunion, in which they sleep together for the last time, Armand sends five hundred francs with a note saying he forgot to pay. This is the last Marguerite hears from him.

The copious illustrations in the book show how the theatre-going public came to accept an increasingly mature Marguerite (or Violetta), as the older, worldly-wise woman with whom the young hero falls in love. Marie Duplessis's lovers would hardly have recognized their old flame in the tragic masks that have become

the modern image of her. The emphasis has moved away from the no longer shocking idea of free love, to a more titillating notion of a disparity in age and experience. It owes something also to the rôle in Verdi's opera, which needs to be sung by a soprano of great power who can encompass the wide range of the music. If one takes Callas as the ideal interpreter of the rôle, as Mlle Issartel does, there is no need to look further than the first scene of the opera and Callas's attack on her opening line in the *Brindisi* "Tra voi saprò dividere - il tempo mio giocondo". This is no twenty-year-old, but a woman who commands a grand salon, a fleet of servants and who, quite incredibly, dismisses her wealthy protector on the spot the moment Armand/Alfredo has declared his interest. It comes as no surprise to find her capable of withstanding pain, suffering and a lonely death for the sake of her mistaken idealization of innocence. It is this mood of heightened drama that has sustained an interest in the story for so long, and it was in Callas's portrayal that the terror and desperation of the dying woman found its greatest expression.

The Liberation spirit

By John Weightman

ELSA TRIOLET:
Chroniques Théâtrales
325pp. Paris: Gallimard.

JEAN VILAR:
Mémoires
Du 29 novembre 1952 au 1er septembre 1955
336pp. Paris: Gallimard.

Some thirty years ago, the French theatre was still in the immediate post-war phase of excitement, when it served simultaneously as a reaffirmation of the national ethos, a vehicle for Liberation idealism and a general outlet for the creativity that had been stifled during the Occupation. These two books take us back to those stirring times, and provide invaluable insights for the reader interested in the French theatre as a historical phenomenon. The fact that they offer a rich harvest of contrasts only proves how volatile and deeply irrational the theatre can be as a social indicator. The interplay between collective forces, individual personalities, economic constraints and conflicting dramatic traditions is so complex that almost any generalization one feels inclined to make begins to crumble as soon as it is formulated.

For instance, both Elsa Triolet and Jean Vilar were known as left-wing personalities, but it is not easy to decide how far the contents of these volumes can be significantly described as left-wing. The late Mme Triolet, a French novelist of Russian origin and the wife of the poet Louis Aragon, was for a time the dramatic director of the Communist periodical *Le Figaro*, edited by her husband. This famous couple (in which the male celebrated the female, in a sort of modern version of *amour courtois*, whereas, in the contemporary Sartre - Simone de Beauvoir partnership, it was rather the female who celebrated the male, in spite of her commitment to the cause of Women's Liberation) belonged officially to the hard Stalinist trend within the Communist Party.

But in this selection of Triolet's theatre articles, there is only one out-and-out Communist piece, and it has nothing to do with France: it is a polemic and totally unconvincing disquisition on theatrical arguments within the Soviet. Vilar's Union, and being out of key with the rest, may only be present as a conventional salute to orthodoxy. Apart from that, Mme Triolet seems honestly to voice her personal likes and dislikes, and some of them might be difficult

to defend from a strictly Marxist point of view. She enthuses about Maurice Chevalier's one-man performances, but was not Chevalier a supreme French master of all the social "bad faith" of Anglo-American show-business? She provides an eloquent obituary for Christian Bérard, yet Bérard was a decadent, homosexual artist-designer, whom it would have been illegitimate to praise, one imagines, in the *Littérature* or *Gazette*; admittedly, Mme Triolet mentions neither homosexuality nor decadence.

It is interesting to see how she copes with some of the notable theatrical events of the period: Barrault's presentation of Claudel's *Le Soulier de Satin*, which clearly bored her to distraction, but which she cannot bring herself fully to condemn, perhaps because Claudel, in spite of his aggressive and archaic Catholicism, was one of those *valeurs françaises* it was important to respect at the time; Barrault and Camus's collaborative effort, *L'Est de Ségès*, which she has the courage to dismiss as a total failure, but does not really bother to analyse philosophically or aesthetically; Sartre's *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, which she sees as another great mistake, without subjecting it to the political critique one might expect. Perhaps she was more instinctive and emotional than theoretical, and belonging to the upper reaches of the Communist hierarchy, could allow herself to be idiosyncratic. At any rate, without constituting great theatrical criticism, her articles are full of surprises, and even have a sort of naive freshness.

She saw the beginnings of Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire and being no more than a tepid Brechtian she has some sharp things to say about one of its earliest presentations, *La Mère Courage*. Witty enough, she dubs Vilar "Le Père Courage", a very appropriate nickname, given all the difficulties and struggles his diary reveals. *Mémoires* is part professional jottings about work in progress, part private diary, part journal intime, and part memoirs about the running battle between the director of the TNP and the government officials administering the state subsidy, although the volume includes notes elucidating some of the more cryptic contemporary references, it unfortunately has no preface to tell us whether or not this is the whole of Vilar's *Nachlass*.

If it is, this 300 pages seem tantalizingly brief, but they are crammed with interesting details about Vilar's personality, his ideas on the theatre and the inner workings of the TNP. He himself seems to have realized, more or less lucidly, that he was not all of a piece. He was at once a democrat, his conviction (his father

had been a shoemaker in the little Mediterranean town of Sète, and he never lost his proletarian sensibilities) and a perfectionist snob by temperament. It is significant that he should express great admiration for Lenin, particularly as a writer - "le génie, la hauteur de l'esprit, l'implacable sens critique . . . le seul homme de raison et d'action qui se soit élevé au grand rôle du maréchal éternel, de l'individualiste solitaire". - while emphasizing again and again the delight he took in performing the part of Molière's Don Juan, the embodiment of aristocratic anarchy. Since the TNP was the theatrical community, working according to *les méthodes artisanales* in the Copecau manner in order to make theatre a kind of self-sufficient activity within the body politic, one would expect Vilar to be a Copecau disciple, but he rejects the suggestion, saying he has nothing in common with that upper-class Catholic and feels himself closer to Antoine, the earlier, realistic innovator.

Although he was constantly suspected in government circles of being a Communist, he had no belief in specifically left-wing theatre - "Abl théâtre populaire, que d'idées on commet en son nom!" - and all his great successes, classical works. He had a special respect for Corneille, whom some left-wing critics have termed proto-Fascist, and declares, in the course of a fascinating analysis of *Cinna*, that it is more "demystifying" in the political sense than "l'importance laquelles des oeuvres engagées contemporaines", an opinion which would have been a large stone in Sartre's garden, had it been made public at the time.

He was also a workaholic, afflicted simultaneously with three physical disabilities: a hernia, stomach ulcers and arthritis. In spite of this, he went on performing, sometimes with a nurse in the wings in case he collapsed, and toured extensively, noting his impressions of the ways the plays were received and commenting on the various national atmospheres. In Eastern Europe, notably, the instinctive anarchist often gets the better of the Leninist admirer.

On the whole, he displays a very French pattern of conflicting tensions, and the fragmentary form of the book, with its mixture of anecdotal vignettes, apophorisms and harsh self-analysis, is very much in the *moraliste* tradition. Vilar may never have won outstanding personal fame as an actor, but *Mémoires* shows him to have been an absolutely dedicated *animateur*, a remarkably unpretentious, broad-minded man of the theatre.



Greco Carbo as Marguerite Gautier in *Camille* (1937) - an unpublished caricature by "Vicky" from a private collection.

FRANÇOISE GIROUD:
Une femme honorable
180pp. Paris: Fayard.
2 213 01006 4

She wasn't an easy woman to deal with. *La mère Curie*: always right, determined to get her way, lacking a sense of humour - a great help to single-mindedness - and not above appealing to feminine weakness (of which she had lots). Timid, and one would think intimidating, tactful, strong of memory, methodical, with a great capacity for concentration. Exasperating in her iron frailty: one is not surprised to hear her chief research assistant pounding his fists on her locked door and calling her a camel - not the familiar *chameau* either, but the academically scrupulous feminine: *chamelle*! Wildcat, a great scientist in her own right, kind and helpful to the young researchers in her laboratory. "In her own right" might be the theme of Françoise Girod's new biography, as it probably was of much of her own striving.

Marie Sklodowska (1867-1934), Maria to her family, was born in Warsaw and always remained a Polish patriot, suspicious of Russian oppression. Orphaned of her mother, she grew up with her father - a gymnasium teacher of mathematics and physics - her brother and her sisters. Something of a dreamer, who lost his savings in a silly speculation, Wladislaw Sklodowski was more interested in music, science and literature than in a career: his family united, cultivated and not exactly poor but fallen on hard times as the middle classes knew them.

The young Sklodowskis spoke five languages, and aspired to higher education. But higher education, available to their brother, was not to be had in Poland where women were not admitted to university. So, Bronia, Marie's elder sister, saved enough money giving private lessons and borrowed some of Marie's savings to go and study medicine in Paris, where she eventually married and set up in practice with a fellow Polish exile. Meanwhile, six years as a governess-cum-tutor enabled Marie to save enough for the fourth-class train fare to Paris and a year's tuition there. Not because French science of the *fin-de-siècle* was particularly brilliant, or even because French mathematics was traditionally strong, but because the Sklodowskis were francophiles and Marie had always dreamed of Claude Bernard and the Sorbonne. So, in 1891, at twenty-four, she joined her sister and brother-in-law in Paris.

It would be wrong to say that she never looked back, since, despite their modest circumstances, the Sklodowskis seem to have done a lot of travelling back and forth; and the unsentimental Marie traced her most sentimental lines when writing about the Vistula's sandy shores. But academically, however strait the path, it would run straight and upward: first of her class in Physics, second in Mathematics, Marie had found her calling. In Pierre Curie she would meet the ideal collaborator. A brilliant experimentalist, Curie was chiefly interested in the varieties of magnetism which - a trait of the times - seem to have included spiritism, table-turning and a regard for other forces that must have seemed kind to X-rays. Working alone or with his brother, he had already made important discoveries in the field of magnetism and electricity. When they met in 1894, Curie was thirty-five, Marie twenty-seven.

Solitary, eccentric, uncompetitive, the man seems to have lived only for Physics. Although sharing in the humanitarianism of his generation, Pierre's positivism of his generation, not divide himself between research and Polish patriotism - or anything else. Science was a jealous mistress. It could tolerate the occasional escapade - sympathy for Dreyfus, a signature for the Russian revolution in 1905 - but no more. Marie was persuaded. With the exception of the war years, 1914-18, there would be no room in her life for causes - not Polish independence,

not feminism - other than scientific ones. As for Pierre, who feared that women's demands for demonstrations of love meant time lost to work and thought, he found an ideal companion, the woman of genius he always hoped to meet and a fellow-monomaniac with whom to share his life, that is his work. In 1895 Marie and Pierre were married - in a civil ceremony, of course - and spent their honeymoon cycling through the countryside on their most welcome wedding gift, Robert Reid's biography of Marie Curie (1974) describes the pair of lovers in love with their new pieces of technology, and the freedom to travel in the following years that gave Marie some of her clearest memories of happiness.

The obsessive nature of scientific discovery has never really been described (June Goodfield's recent *An Imagined World* is a happy exception). Yet the Curies' story remains incomplete without it. Pierre far more than Marie failed for a long time to get the recognition he deserved - and quickly craved. But the greatest frustrations either endured lay in the nature of their disciplines: the tedious slogging, the experiments endlessly repeated, the errors, the failures and need to begin once again, the criticism, and the inevitable professional jealousies and feuds. Only true love (and love tends to be exclusive) could bind one to such endeavours.

There was much love, indeed, and private happiness was supplemented by public success as Pierre, who had worked for years as *chargé (or surchargé)* de cours at the Paris School of Industrial Chemistry and Physics, was at last appointed to a Professorship there and able to shift the locus of his research from a corridor to an abandoned shed. Marie was to describe the next few years as "the best and happiest of our life." Inspired by the current interest in Roentgen's discovery of X-rays, and in the new phenomenon of radioactivity discussed by Henri Becquerel, the two researchers in their "misérable shed" set out to pursue the elements involved. They saw that uranium salts emitted rays similar to X-rays, and Marie found that pitchblende, a natural ore, lent itself even better to her quest. By 1898 first polonium then radium had been identified; within a few years, separated and purified, they were established as elements. By 1903, the Curies' work and that of Becquerel had won the Nobel Prize in Physics.

Glory came with a rush, reinforced by public interest in the medical applications of radium's radioactivity, in its possibilities for the treatment of cancer and, not least, in the novelty of an eminent scientist who was also a wife and mother. Most satisfying, however, was the cash that accompanied the prizes, which they used to improve the primitive conditions under which they laboured. Official recognition was important too: a lectureship in Physics for Marie, election to the Academy of Science and a professorship at the Sorbonne for Pierre - at last, finally, an appointment for her as Chief Assistant in his lab. Irene had been born in 1897, Eva in 1904, with no interruption to their research. And then, quite suddenly, one rainy afternoon in April 1906, on the rue Dauphine, Pierre walked into or slipped under the wheels of a horse-car to be killed. In May, Marie succeeded to his Chair in General Physics, the first woman to hold a university chair in France, as she had been the first to gain a Science doctorate, let alone share a Nobel Prize. Her first lecture began where he had left off.

Marie's work went on, but being a scientist in her own right was not easy in a world of men. In 1911, the year she won a second Nobel Prize - her own, this time in Chemistry - she was beaten at the post in an election to the Academy of Sciences (the Academy of Medicine would elect her in 1922). That same year the press boiled over with revelations about her affair with Paul Langevin, five years her junior, once her husband's brilliant student, now at the Collège de France. The influence of her lawyer, Raymond Poincaré, the mathematician's brother, both with the courts and with the press (Poincaré happened to be

In her own right

By Eugen Weber

counsel of the Paris Press Association) restrained publicly; but even Poincaré could not muzzle the gutter press or the nationalist papers - *Libre Parole*, *Action française*, which seized the opportunity to attack the foreigner destroying a happy (!) French home. Eve Curie's biography speaks only of a "campaign period", and does not say what (or who) it was about. Reid is more explicit, also more to the point when he describes Marie's belief that her private relationship with Langevin could escape public notice as a disastrous miscalculation. Girod treats the disaster as an insult - not only to genius and to private lives, but to womanhood, subject to rules men could safely ignore.

At any rate, for someone as obsessed with privacy as Marie, the crisis was traumatic, and only reinforced her nervous dislike of journalists. Only one representative of the press would ever gain her confidence, the American "Missy" Mattingly, arranger of her American trips and, in due course, of her biography, a reluctant characteristically reticent and flat. The affair with Langevin came to a brusque end, but the friendship from which it grew lasted to her death. Like many ungracious persons, Marie made fast friends, who stood by her. In any case, after 1911, few public obstacles resisted her for long.

The war offered an opportunity for Marie's organizing ability: the stationary and mobile radiological ambulances she set up performed millions of X-rays, saving thousands of lives. The Radium Institute, long a building on the rue Pierre Curie (Marie now has her own square in the 13^e arrondissement) surged forward after an American trip arranged by Missy Mattingly furnished the money and the radium to turn it into a universal centre for nuclear physics and chemistry.

The relation between money and research had not been immediately evident or readily accepted. For Marie's generation, and Pierre's, applied science evoked little interest and less respect. Disinterested work alone, Pasteur declared, could lead to progress in the theoretical field and only that, in turn, to advances in the applied field. Research meant pure research. The Curies never took out patents on their discovery of radium, which could have made them immensely wealthy; never collected any royalties. Now Marie realized that even pure research needed large funds, and that funding was more likely to follow positive industrial applications. Old friends in parliament and government - Born, Poincaré, Herriot - better aware than most that brains are inconveniently attached to stomachs, legislated serious support for scientific research. More immediately, though, the real money, not only for the Paris enterprise but for a new Polish one bearing Marie's name, had to come from America once again. By 1932 another Radium Institute had been set up in Warsaw, with sister Bronia as its director.

In neither Institute was much attention paid to the dangers of radioactivity. Radiation could kill healthy cells as well as diseased ones; but Marie refused to admit to perils that good fresh air and exercise could not cure. Reid reports that a visiting English scientist was taught only one precaution: to change his lab-coat frequently. By the time Marie died in 1935, of leukaemia caused by radiation, a good few of her collaborators had preceded her.

Girod's account draws heavily on the excellent biographies by Eve Curie (1938) and Robert Reid. Although easy to read, it contributes no fresh intelligence, besides the author's view of the first woman to make significant contributions to science as a heroine of the feminist cause. And certainly, looking back, one sees the problems Marie had to face, the obstacles she had to overcome, the prejudices she had to vanquish because of her sex. One wonders, however, if that is how Marie perceived her situation. In a man's world, she forged ahead, making no concessions and, really, asked for none. She won on merit, which colleagues denied no more than they would a man's. The problems that she

faced (slender resources, slow recognition, demagogic chauvinism) were faced by men as well. To her husband she was a peerless collaborator. Her fellow-scientists accepted her from the first as a competitor, and an equal or superior.

The author implies that Marie suffered a certain frustration in being forced to take second place to Pierre; and one can understand Girod's disgust at the biographical notice of the current Penn Laronse, which subordinates the woman to the man and even appears to attribute her Nobel Prize to him, five years after his death. Girod presents Pierre giving the Nobel acceptance speech in 1903 with Marie condemned to watch and listen; then quotes passages from Marie's Stockholm speech of 1911 to stress her insistence on her own achievement: ne . . . me . . . me. It is interesting to compare her treatment of these occasions with that of Eve Curie, who is impressed rather with Marie's desire to praise Pierre and stress their common labour. The fact is that Marie resisted attempts to draw her into the feminist movement, and she did very well on her own; and that (as Reid concluded) "as a woman scientist she was liberated because she had created the conditions for her own liberation."

Girod's epigraph, Paul Valéry's "je vaudrais ce que je veux", reflects the same preconception. I am not worth what I will, but what I realize of my will. I may will to play the piano, yet fail for lack of instruction and practice; or will to write a book and fail for lack of discipline, hard work or, even, talent. However strong a will she did not bother to hide beneath her frail exterior, Marie did not will her worth, she made it. She liked to be better, even than the friends with whom she swam in Brittany, on holiday. She liked to win, even at scrabble. She was better than most; and she won. Girod, an admirable woman, has demonstrated she does not lack for talent - or for will. In this case, however, a reader interested in the life and work of Marie Curie would do better to address himself to the work of her daughter or of Robert Reid.

A Catalogue of European Scientific Instruments in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities of the British Museum by F. A. B. Wurd (152pp. British Museum Publications. £50. 0 7141 1345 X) is divided into two main sections: "Instruments for Time Measurement" and "Mathematical, Astronomical, Surveying and Miscellaneous Instruments".

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Until recently popular discourse concerning the Middle East was framed in predominantly secular terms, such as strategy, economics, state power and ethnic rivalries. Quite suddenly these concepts were overshadowed by that of Islam and newspapers were full of disquisitions on the nature of that religion, its history and its possible future. No doubt a crucial event in this change of emphasis was the Iranian revolution of 1978-9, but to that dramatic episode were joined various developments in Muslim countries to produce a picture of what is commonly referred to as the revival of Islam. From the material about Islam produced by newspapers, journals, radio and television Edward Said has derived the material for this short, vigorous, but disappointing book.

The first part of *Covering Islam* is devoted to a discussion of different views of Islam and of the attitude towards Islam adopted by the media. It is not an easy section to read on account of the opacity with which Said surrounds some central questions. What, for example, is Islam? Said remarks, reasonably enough, that it is a misleading label because it obscures great differences between Muslims. Equally reasonably, he observes that it is very difficult to avoid using the term. But it is used to mean various things, with the consequence that there are several Islams, all acts of will or interpretation. Is there any reason then for preferring one view to another? If one supposes that there is somewhere a real or objective Islam the

answer is in the affirmative: different interpretations may be judged according to the degree of their correspondence with the real. But Said rejects this avenue, appearing to deny that there is a real Islam or at least that it might be useful to investigate it. Nevertheless, it is very plain that he prefers some interpretations to others and in particular dislikes that which he discerns in the media. We may return to consider his solution of this conundrum later.

Other obscurities surround Islam, however. One is to do with the geographical area he considers to be embraced by Islam. Nominally it is that area inhabited by Muslims, but since many of his statements are untrue when applied to South and South-East Asia and Africa one must assume that he actually means the Middle East, fairly narrowly defined. Another concerns the status of his own study of Islam. Are we to regard media treatment of Islam as typical of media treatment of a large part of the world or are we to regard Islam as a special case? Both, Said writes, implausibly. Finally, darkness surrounds the question of the media's view of Islam. It is perfectly clear that many different views of Islam have been presented in the media and Said does not deny this fact. At the same time he claims that there is a central consensus, which is determined either by government policy, or by what we are and want, or possibly by the control of the commanding heights of the media by a small group (it is not clear which of these he favours).

All of these propositions surely cannot be true and one begins to wonder whether Said's method - that of subjective impression derived from reading - is really the best way to conduct a study of this sort. Perhaps, after all, there is something to be said for the laborious method of counting column inches and minutes of prime time and assigning them to some arbitrary catalogue of views of Islam.

The central part of *Covering Islam* contains a description of the United States media's treatment of the hostage crisis. Said remarks, justly, that a lot of nonsense was written about Iran during this period and points out that nearly all of the journalists sent to cover the crisis knew no Persian and very little of Iran or

Islam. They were short on hard fact and long on not always relevant comment. Although few would agree with the sharp distinction he draws between American and European coverage, most specialists would agree with Said's opinion that reporting in *Le Monde* was better than that in English-language papers. Said also notes, perceptively, that interviewers commonly asked the wrong questions, thereby leaving uncovered the more significant features of events. Anyone who has ever been interviewed as an expert on some remote corner of the world will be familiar with the situation in which questions are directed towards the international features of a crisis and away from the more important internal aspects. The interviewer's defence is that he is asking the questions to which he people want answers and if the questions display ignorance, well, so do the people. Whether it is true that people want the answers to those questions seems doubtful. Possibly they just want to know what is happening and whether it will affect them.

It is not surprising that much American media comment on Iran and Islam during this period was hostile. Much more violent reactions were produced in Britain by similar situations in Kabul in 1982 and Abyssinia in 1987, and by related episodes at Lucknow in 1857-8 and Peking in 1900. Contemplating the warlike resolution of these events, what seems most remarkable is the patience and restraint with which the United States conducted itself throughout the affair and (with all its limitations) the diligence with which it sought to apprehend rationally the causes of the problem, rather than the hostility (more discriminating than Said concedes) with which it regarded those responsible. No doubt the speed with which the government of Mr. Bazarang resigned, leaving the United States with no obvious recipient of an ultimatum, and a probably unwarranted fear of what the Soviet Union might do, contributed to the caution of the United States, although some credit is still due to American indulgence. But it is altogether too much when Said suggests that the United States should not have become so agitated about the hostages in view of the fact that Iran was going through a complicated revolution at the time. In the last part of the book, Said

describes the sources of the media's view of Islam and sets out his own position in more general terms. All knowledge, claims Said, is determined by situation: the situation of the West in relation to Islam ensures that all knowledge is political and is acquired and used to serve the purpose of domination, the perpetuation of an unequal relationship. Those who write about Iran cannot evade their situation, and all he asks is that they should be conscious of it. What he objects to is what he sees as the hypocrisy of the Orientalist who, he contends, claims that his knowledge of Islam is objective. He singles out for attack Bernard Lewis for claiming that Europeans study other civilizations out of curiosity and Leonard Binder for claiming that disciplinary codes reduce the element of inevitable bias in the approach of the scholar towards another culture. The basis of European interest in other cultures, Said asserts, has always been "commercial, colonial or military expansion, empire".

Covering *Islam* is, therefore, evidently and avowedly the third and final volume treating the themes first set out in *Orientalism*. The picture of Islam displayed by the media is one originally drawn by the Orientalist, who, in the United States, is still, Said would have us believe, the tool of those interests concerned to perpetuate the unequal relationship.

This is not the place either to reopen the discussion of *Orientalism* or to examine Said's familiar intellectual position. But one major criticism of this book should be made. Said complains that he cannot understand what Binder means when he writes (admittedly a little darkly) of disciplinary codes reducing bias. Most scholars, however, would agree that one way in which the wider flights of fancy are controlled is the basic rule that statements should be in accordance with the evidence. Seemingly Said does not accept this rule. A feature of *Orientalism* was the circumstance that many of the lengthy quotations which Said produced to demonstrate so-called Orientalist attitudes simply did not bear the meaning which he ascribed to them. It was not a matter of difference of interpretation but of straightforward misrepresentation. In the present book it is more difficult to pin the author down, since lengthy quotations are seldom given and

the sources are mainly two-year-old newspapers, tiresome, though rewarding, to check. There is a danger, therefore, that readers may assume that Said has done his homework; that he has faithfully represented what the media actually said about Islam; and that further debate may proceed from that position. Such an assumption would be most unwise.

Two examples must suffice to illustrate Said's cavalier approach to evidence in *Covering Islam*. On page 109 there is a quotation from an editorial by Ernest Conline in the *Los Angeles Times* (December 10, 1979). The interpretation which follows is a complete distortion of what Conline wrote. To select one passage - Conline wrote: "... the Shah is hated not just because his police tortured people but also because he took away government subsidies from Moslem holy men". Said comments: "Conline assumes, without any warrant except ethnocentric bias, that Iranians were less troubled by torture than by the insult to their holy men". The concept of the relative importance of the Shah's offences is imported solely by Said. What would he say to one of his students who perpetrated so elementary an error in a comprehension test? The second example is taken from the preceding page. Referring to an article by Edmund Bosworth in the *Los Angeles Times* of December 12, 1979, Said claims that Bosworth supports the "theory that all [Said's emphasis] political activity for a period of almost twelve hundred years in an area that includes Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, Spain and India can be understood as emanating from the Muslim call for Jihad". The casual reader is left to take this statement on trust. As I write, however, I have before me a copy of this article (entitled "Will Iran launch a Holy War?") which was first published in *Newsday* on December 2, 1979. It is a discussion of the role of the Jihad in recent Muslim history and concludes that it is unlikely that a general Muslim Jihad would be directed against the West. There is absolutely nothing whatsoever in it to justify the statement about "all political activity etc". If this is a fair sample of Said's standards of interpretation one is not surprised that he should be so hostile to the idea of objective knowledge.

absorbing interest for Chinese studies is to see spelt out by experts the prelate nature of the medical consequences which may result from the stressful aspects of Chinese social institutions. For example, the daughter-in-law's situation in the traditional family is a special source of culturally engendered stress which has yielded high rates of psychological problems and suicide among young married women. Indeed Andrew Hsiah and Jonathan Spence conclude that for long periods of China's pre-modern history suicide was not regarded as deviant. The ancient source-book for praiseworthy female suicide is the *Lieh-ni chuan* (Biographies of Women), which gives examples of women preferring death to the indignity of the most trivial rules of propriety. One of these heroines even perished in the flames because there was no chaparron to escort her from her burning home. Such were the examples of chastity set before women in traditional China.

The family institution is also very important in the lives of the mentally ill (as shown by Tsung-yi Lin and Mel-chen Lin). Because mental illnesses are regarded as punishment for violating Confucian norms such as filial piety, these problems, like so many others in Chinese society, tend to be coped with inside the family rather than by outside agencies. This means that medical authorities may misdiagnose the incidence of mental illness in Chinese communities. This tendency is accentuated by the fact that the family sees mental illness as

a disgrace, which is mitigated if it is believed that the sufferer has physical rather than mental disorder. View of the belief in the moral causes of mental illness, the cure is naturally sought in moral exhortation, a tradition which survived in the People's Republic in the form of group therapy through the study of Mao Tse-tung's thought.

Further evidence for the tenacity of Chinese culture is to be found in an interesting essay by Eng-seong Tan on culture-bound syndromes among overseas Chinese, including *koro*, the phobia that the penis is retracting into the body and that the patient will die when it finally does so; this phobia has been traced back to the tenth century in China and, somewhat implausibly, attributed to the prominence of castration as a punishment in that country.

For those whose interest is in less bizarre and more central manifestations of Chinese culture there is an important contribution by James McGough on deviant marriage patterns in Chinese society - everything from the practice of adopting young girls as prospective brides, polyandry, levirate, sororate, "ghost marriages" (ie, to the ghost of a dead betrothed), to "same-sex" unions. He concludes that we are introducing our own prejudices in thinking of "normal" and "deviant". These various marriage patterns result from the overriding need to recruit into the family group productive members, to which end the slow and unreliable processes of sex and reproduction are only one route.

commentary

Kitsch, bombast and enlightenment

By Norman Stone

Prussia: Versuch einer Bilanz
Martin-Gropius Bau, West Berlin

Both German states have lately been having a competition for the Prussian inheritance. The East Germans, whose geographical position, artificial state and goose-stepping soldiers (what would the "Victims of Fascism" have made of those grim guards outside their monument in the centre of Berlin?) give them the obvious claim. The West Germans, on the other hand, mounted a series on Schanzenstrasse and the Prussian recovery after 1800; their historians publicly announced that it was wrong to call all ruling classes, all of the time, reactionary; and, now that the fraternal peoples are encouraged to associate Communism with the national cause, in history and sport, the East Germans have been discovering a nationalism of their own. The crowning symbol of this was the restitution, to its old place Unter den Linden, of the (hideous) statue of Frederick the Great which, after the war, had been dumped in obscurity. The West Germans' reply has been to stage an exhibition of Prussian history, in a building just by the Wall.

I came to this exhibition with a jaundiced eye, arriving not from the west but from the east. It was a journey that had taken in Auschwitz-Birkenau: acres upon acres of wooden huts, spaced with shattering regularity, divided into lots by ancient barbed wire, and the whole camp cut in half by the now rusting railway line that led straight to the gas chambers. The journey took me through Warsaw, so painstakingly restored after its total destruction by the Germans in 1944, and even through the flat lands of Poznan, annexed to Prussia for over a century. Your feelings about Prussia do not improve when you enter East Berlin. Red placards, visible from the train, celebrate twenty years of "Fascist Protection Wall". "For Our Security" is the claim. When, on a Saturday morning, you reach the Friedrichstrasse crossing-point, you join a queue of hundreds - ordinary tourists, international youth with their vast rucksacks and transistors, *Gastarbeiter* back from a spree in the east, and, saddest of all, broken-down East German pensioners, some with crutches, going to see their relatives in the West. This huge queue struggles through a narrow corridor of corrugated iron towards two customs-posts, where a grim official looks you sternly in the eye to make sure yours is the face recorded in the passport photograph.

None of it is a good introduction to an exhibition that calls itself *Prussia: Striking a Balance* (what the title really means is "Prussia: Good and Bad"), but the organizers have sensibly avoided adjectives, and have tried desperately hard to avoid giving offence. Still, qualifications at once spring to mind. Auschwitz was largely thought up by South Germans, and operated often enough by Ukrainians. East Germany was created by foreigners, and is worked by Saxons - pastiche Prussians. The models torn apart in the Berlin Wall were not the Berliners of the 1930s, but the then Chicago's Foreign Ministry looks (inappropriately) like an enormous travel agency. Then again, the evils that we associate with Prussia are not uniquely Prussian. In many ways, for instance, Scotland resembles a demilitarized Prussia, and the Prussian characteristics - honesty, frugality, cleanliness, order, discipline, effort, intolerance and lack of imagination - can be found in the annals of many Protestant parishes, great or small. When these Protestant civilizations had to come to terms with softer Catholic ones, the result was often a considerable distortion of the worst features of both sides. The Scots' experience with the Irish is mirrored by the Prussians' experience with the Poles, who at one time made up a third of Prussia's population. Eighteenth-century Prussia was enlightened enough to do duty as a propaganda effort today. But Prussia of the late nineteenth century?

This West German exhibition has been mounted with Prussian modesty and charm. It is enormous. As you enter it and look up, your eye is first caught by a horse's rump, suspended from a balloon. It is the neither end of a plastic replica of an equestrian statue of Kaiser Wilhelm I. The old party rather hilarily waves a sword, but in his life-time he was chiefly memorable for a meanness that could almost stifle an exhibition of its own: he would solemnly mark his decanter, after he had had his glass of wine. This plastic Pegasus censors around above an assemblage of nineteenth-century industrial artefacts, in the middle of which there is a very large Krupp gun. On two floors around, there are portraits, books, prints, statues, ornaments, uniforms, models, letters, pamphlets, cartoons, plates, knives, forks, spoons, pieces of furniture, and an enormous what-the-butler-saw containing three-dimensional shots of old Berlin. It is irresistible.

It is of course nearly impossible to exhibit a country. You might manage it for Anhalt-Zerbst, but what a bore that would be. A Great Power, with frontiers that took in widely different parts of the European continent, and a past that takes in all the centuries and - opolies in the book, defies this kind of display unless a strong central theme can be established. In this exhibition, an old Austrian joke about Prussian architecture at once springs to mind: poverty, disguised by richness.

In the first, and vital, place, Prussia is not a visual country. It was too stuck-up to have a naïf tradition of any charm, and too provincial to have much concept of aesthetics. In this exhibition, there are many portraits. You move, however, from weaselly, frigid sixteenth-century faces to a Dutch daub of "The Great Elector as Scipio" (he looks like Porthos) and then to the grim, flinty countenances of the Prussian Enlightenment (vague, reminiscent of the rows of waxen heads around the assembly hall of the Edinburgh Academy).

The objects d'art here displayed in a profusion that borders on the manic, are not much more. Where not imported they were usually brought in by the turn of the century, the Alexanderplatz was a faceless, bombastic mess; and in 1906 people were already lamenting the fate of old Berlin, the first of Europe's cities to be ruined in the name of progress. Here, at any rate, is a Prussian tradition to which East Berlin can lay a claim of unrivalled legitimacy.

In architecture, too, Prussia was a mess. True, there was a brief period, coinciding roughly with the English Regency, when Berlin acquired a certain openness and elegance, as the then Chicago's Foreign Ministry looks (inappropriately) like an enormous travel agency. Then again, the evils that we associate with Prussia are not uniquely Prussian. In many ways, for instance, Scotland resembles a demilitarized Prussia, and the Prussian characteristics - honesty, frugality, cleanliness, order, discipline, effort, intolerance and lack of imagination - can be found in the annals of many Protestant parishes, great or small. When these Protestant civilizations had to come to terms with softer Catholic ones, the result was often a considerable distortion of the worst features of both sides. The Scots' experience with the Irish is mirrored by the Prussians' experience with the Poles, who at one time made up a third of Prussia's population. Eighteenth-century Prussia was enlightened enough to do duty as a propaganda effort today. But Prussia of the late nineteenth century?



"King FRITZ", one of 216 pen-and-ink drawings by Adolph von Menzel (1815-1905) reproduced in *FRITZ: Leben und Abenteuer Friedrichs des Grossen mit Bildern von Adolph v. Menzel* with captions by Wolfgang Vemohr (224pp. Bergisch Gladbach: Lubbe. 3 7857 0284 1). The lively genre pictures (some with their personages' exclamations in cloud-shaped balloons) are all taken from four books with illustrations by the successful artist and lithographer von Menzel, published between 1840 and 1878. *Frederick the Great* is here shown aged just 44, at the beginning of 1756 and the height of his life - "the little man from Berlin" (1.65m) known throughout the whole world". In his bejewelled, colourful, personal uniform.

troys the historic perspectives. Capitalists - who boasted that the only good thing about their tenements was the acoustics - completed the wreck. By the turn of the century, the Alexanderplatz was a faceless, bombastic mess; and in 1906 people were already lamenting the fate of old Berlin, the first of Europe's cities to be ruined in the name of progress. Here, at any rate, is a Prussian tradition to which East Berlin can lay a claim of unrivalled legitimacy.

Visually, then, there is nothing much you can do with Prussia. You have to organize historical artefacts as best you can. The organizers of this exhibition have responded to the challenge in the modern manner: they have lined the walls with prose. It is good prose, competently summarizing complicated historical issues, and attractively printed on some collateral descendant of the rayon that was one of nineteenth-century Prussia's industrial achievements. But you do not go to exhibitions to read; and, when it comes to looking at objects, you are left with an impression of shapeless profusion.

One trouble is that the organizers have tried to do too much. I imagine that they had too many interest-groups to satisfy - socialists, industrialists, diplomats, foreigners, historians. The exhibition starts off in the mists of the Teutonic Order, concen-

teenth-century Prussia was enlightened enough to do duty as a propaganda effort today. But Prussia of the late nineteenth century?

All of this is reasonable enough. But the exhibitors have not known how to handle the inner side of Prussia. There is, after the seventeenth century, next to nothing on the Junkers or their relationship with their peasants - surely one of the essential elements in that marvellous oppressive machinery of wheels and cogs reaching fur down into the peasantry. That turned this sandbox into a great power. The harsh character of the Prussian emancipation of the serfs, which was just a device for transferring land to the large estates and squeezing the small peasants off the land, is not explained. Above all, the army has been treated in a very strange and inappropriate way.

The nineteenth- (let alone the twentieth-) century army has been more or less ignored. The eighteenth-century army appears as a collection of uniforms, old weapons, officers' portraits, and a few battle-plans. Its extraordinary martial music and amazing drill appear only on a television screen, in which a silhouetted soldier, to a few bars of military jingle, does about-turns every ten seconds or so. Military glory really appears only in a spectacular room of Bismarck kitsch: huge, sub-Meissonian paintings of him on a white horse, waving a sword, or a life-sized statue of him dressed as a blacksmith. I left this exhibition none the wiser as to why the Prussian army won so many victories, or why they were so misused. We are given no clue as to the tension between the dynasty's Calvinism and the masses' Lutheranism; there is nothing to explain why Prussians, for all their talents, were such appallingly poor politicians (even the bourgeois ones behaved as if they were acting out the rôle cast for them by Marx); the space given to Prussia's vast Polish inheritance - and, consequently, mainly of appeals made in 1848 for Prusso-Polish unity (it was the allegedly liberal emperor Frederick III who was the first Prussian ruler to stop his eldest son, the later Kaiser, from learning Polish). The heart of this whole exhibition is really that mass of dumb, virtually unexplained industrial machinery on the ground floor. Of that, at least, we can see the obvious point; and it is my only enduring (though unwelcome) memory of this display.

On leaving the exhibition, I was handed a pamphlet by local protesters. Why spend ten million Marks, they asked, on a silly question such as "Preussen: Versuch einer Bilanz"? The balance of Prussia, they argued, is "corpses, corpses and still more corpses". They are wrong, but it is possible to see what they mean. I should have done better to stay at home and read Carlyle.

CUP have recently reissued J. P. Stern's *Re-interpretations: Seven studies in nineteenth-century German literature* (370pp. £25 hardback, 0 221 23083 4; £7.95 paperback, 0 221 28366 3). The book is a study of German prose from the death of Goethe to the heyday of the Wilhelminian Empire, and includes essays on Grillparzer, Büchner, Schopenhauer, Heine, Stifter and Fontane; this last, with its comparison of *Effi Briest* with *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, was singled out for praise in the *TLS*'s review of the book when it appeared in 1964.

Stresses and strains

By Raymond Dawson

JEROME ALAN COHEN, R. RANDLE EDWARDS and FU-MEI CHANG CHEN (Editors)
Essays on China's Legal Tradition
438pp. Princeton University Press.
£17.70.
0 691 09238 9

ARTHUR KLEINMAN and TSUNG-YI LIN (Editors)
Normal and Abnormal Behaviour in Chinese Culture
436pp. Dordrecht: Reidel. Dfl 75.
90 277 1104 6

These two books testify to the greater depth being achieved in Chinese studies by the efforts of groups of experts working together on the same theme. They also make valuable contributions to the debate on continuity and change in contemporary China, and help one to understand the tenacity of traditional Chinese culture in the face of the powerful impact of the modern world.

The concept of law in China has been very different from our own. The belief in a cosmic order to which the social order had to conform had fundamental implications for Chinese legal thinking. Of basic importance too was the hierarchical nature of Confucian family ethics, which meant that there should be different penalties according to the relationship between the doer and victim

of a crime. Powerful too were the constraints of bureaucracy: as Max Weber put it, the administration of justice in traditional China was "a type of patriarchal obliteration of the line between justice and administration", a description which has even been applicable at times to the system in operation in the People's Republic. Indeed after the anti-rightist movement of 1957 the experiment with Soviet-style trials was abandoned in favour of exclusive resort to the traditional inquisitorial methods of adjudication, in which there was no place for counsel for the defence.

Apart from distinguished contributions from Carol on ancient Chinese legal institutions and Miyazaki on Sung law, *Essays on China's Legal Tradition* is devoted to the Ch'ing period. Especially interesting are the essays by Bodde, on the allowances made for the age, youth, or infirmity of criminals, Meijer, on slavery at the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty, and Brockman, on the commercial contract law operating on Taiwan in the nineteenth century.

Because of the very different nature of their subject-matter, Kleinman, Lin and their collaborators have had to restrict their researches largely to Taiwan and overseas Chinese communities, including those in America. One of the prime questions which *Normal and Abnormal Behaviour in Chinese Culture* addresses itself to is "what are the universal and what are the culture-specific dimensions of pathology and deviance among Chinese?" Here, the

absorbing interest for Chinese studies is to see spelt out by experts the prelate nature of the medical consequences which may result from the stressful aspects of Chinese social institutions. For example, the daughter-in-law's situation in the traditional family is a special source of culturally engendered stress which has yielded high rates of psychological problems and suicide among young married women.

Indeed Andrew Hsiah and Jonathan Spence conclude that for long periods of China's pre-modern history suicide was not regarded as deviant. The ancient source-book for praiseworthy female suicide is the *Lieh-ni chuan* (Biographies of Women), which gives examples of women preferring death to the indignity of the most trivial rules of propriety. One of these heroines even perished in the flames because there was no chaparron to escort her from her burning home. Such were the examples of chastity set before women in traditional China.

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GEORGE BULL, *New Nation*

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BODLEY
HEAD

commentary

Grey beard and glittering eye

By K. Z. Cieszkowski

Thomas Carlyle 1795-1881
National Portrait Gallery

Whereas the large centenary exhibition at the National Library of Scotland set out to document Carlyle's life and writings, with a wealth of manuscripts and letters and other documents from the Library's own holdings and elsewhere, the smaller display at the National Portrait Gallery in London concentrates solely on portraiture. Any ancillary documentation (a small selection of books and letters, in particular illustrating Carlyle's relationship with the NPG - a medallion-portrait of Carlyle appears on the facade of the Gallery, above the entrance) is offered rather as an afterthought. What is important is the image of the man - a portraitist's dream.

The early, beardless Carlyle was delineated by John Linnell (an impressively romantic portrait dating from 1843-4) and Samuel Laurence - the first portrait by Laurence is in a private collection, but is reproduced on the cover of the Edinburgh catalogue. The outstanding feature of Carlyle's face at this time was the tight-lipped mouth, the lower lip thrust forward sharply to give him a firm and intransigent expression. Carlyle's beard, once grown (for the most curious of reasons - as an expression of solidarity with the sol-

diers then fighting in the Crimea), ranks high in the league-table of Eminent Victorian Beards - alongside the beards of Meredith and the young Hardy, above those of Browning and Darwin, but a shade below those of Bagehot and Tennyson. Carlyle's face reverted in middle age to that of the Lowlands peasant, with something of the Old Testament prophet thrown in - the hair wildly unkempt and unruly, the beard thick and greying from the extremities. The eyes took over from the mouth as the most expressive feature of his face, the usual expression being one of intense melancholy and tragic gloom - a visual expression of what the letters make plain.

As regards the later portraits, it is impossible to do more than just speculate on who got it right - Carlyle's own judgement cannot be relied on too much, as he was notoriously erratic in his valuation of pictorial matters. Of the five major later portraits (Watts, Whistler, Millais, Robert Herdman and Boehm), Carlyle preferred Herdman's (on loan from the Scottish National Portrait Gallery) and hated Watts's (the second version of three is on display). In the case of the famous Whistler picture, Carlyle thought the artist had done a portrait of his features. Whistler's painting (originally 'Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2' - not a very flattering title from sitter's point of view) shows a profoundly sad and tired man, the expression vacant and melancholy in the extreme - but it is one of the

finest images of Carlyle that have come down to us. Millais's portrait is the most eloquent in its presentation of the man, bearing as it does a great sense of dignity and solid grandeur. The gloom is replaced by an intellectual vitality, and the sitter looks out with an expression of challenge and combativeness - the face is moulded in thick broad strokes, but the hands have been left unfinished, only lightly sketched in, clasping the head of a walking cane. In Helen Allingham's small watercolour, Carlyle seems dominated by his surroundings - furniture, portraits of Cromwell and Luther, etc.

The photographs fix the features sufficiently to suggest that Watts's portrait failed to achieve a likeness, and one of the Julia Margaret Cameron photographs (from the Herschel album - the craggy face emerging from darkness, invested with great mystery and a deep silence) is one of the most powerful images of Carlyle, and certainly the finest of her photographs.

In addition to portraits of Carlyle, there is a small gallery of portraits of Carlyle's heroes - Dante, Cromwell, Frederick the Great, Luther, Napoleon, Samuel Johnson, Burns - but no Robert Peel, in fact no contemporary heroes at all. The display takes its cue from the *On Heroes* lectures, and could be accused of grossly simplifying Carlyle's ideas by transforming them into simple hero-worship. However, the catalogue adds the nuances to this simplification.



An 1875 aquatint of Carlyle by an unknown artist, from the exhibition reviewed here.

Plumbing the shallows

By David Profumo

The Beastly Beautitudes of
Balthazar B.
Duke of York's Theatre

J. P. Doyle's association with the theatre has not always been fortunate, but this has characteristically not deterred him from presenting a stage adaptation of yet another of his novels, the richly comic *Balthazar B.* Unfortunately the task of funneling such an episodic book into a coherent play results in an untidy script in spite of the comic strength of much of its dialogue. The first quarter of the novel, which deals beautifully with Balthazar's childhood, is excluded and the play opens in his student chambers in post-war Dublin, where he leads a lonely, elegant life away from his native France, engaged in the joint pursuits of Natural Sciences and the lovely Elizabeth Fitzgibbon, only to have his university career terminated after a sexual imbroglio organized by his old schoolfriend, the ebullient Beefy. After these adolescent shenanigans, the play disintegrates into a number of scenes set in and around London, illustrating Balthazar's eventual and unhappy marriage, and Beefy's mind-boggling sexual pursuits.

There are two major faults with this design. Firstly, the character of Balthazar is given very little scope for development, since the imaginative life which the novel affords him through its blend of first- and third-person narration is reduced to a few unsatisfactory reveries during the disruptive scene-changes. Despite the ideal stage-presence as Balthazar, therefore, Patrick Ryecart has little verbal ammunition with which to combat the disarmingly obese personality of the beefy Beefy, played by Simon Pegg.

from its central figure and becomes a vehicle for the beastly boudettes of Beefy. Instead, his compulsive search for sin and his amazing professional misfortunes establish him as a personality of more interest than his diffident friend, and Simon Callow whisks through the part like a man possessed.

As Fitzgibbon, Susan Gilmore has to contend with the second problem, for her appearance is confined to the first part, yet her presence as the girl of Balthazar's fantasies must haunt the rest of the play. She is certainly alluring, but the tantalizing shyness of her courtship is sadly compressed into two scenes. This important narrative axis to the plot fails to survive the second part, where Rod Daniels's direction gives undue prominence to a series of cameo episodes which bewilder the audience as much as the hero. The emphasis is on scenes of sexual titillation and farce during which Balthazar struggles to keep in mind the memory of his former love, while participating fully in a number of romps: we see him emerge naked from his amours to confront a posse of voyeuristic neighbours, attend a live striptease show with Beefy, and attempt to seduce Alphonsine, played by Lizzy Romilly as an old-ls is at pair who addresses the French-born Balthazar in a thick Parisian accent. Amid such a melée of encounters the adoration of Fitzgibbon necessarily loses credibility, and the pathos of the conclusion evaporates.

For addicts of Doyle, this makes an infuriating evening; though the theatrical realization of Beefy as a lively libretto is a comic triumph, and Sue Formstone's costume designs honour the book's constant sartorial details, the play itself lacks focus. Characters are introduced and then dropped with little continuity, and while this does allow some splendid performances on stage (particularly

Lands and languages

By Paul Muldoon

Three Sisters
Grand Opera House, Belfast

This is the second production from the Field Day Theatre Company, established last year by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea with a view to bringing drama to towns throughout Ireland. *Three Sisters* opened in Derry's Guild Hall, itself the setting for Friel's play *The Freedom of the City*, and has been packing them in in Belfast's Grand Opera House, various centres throughout Ulster and more recently in the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival.

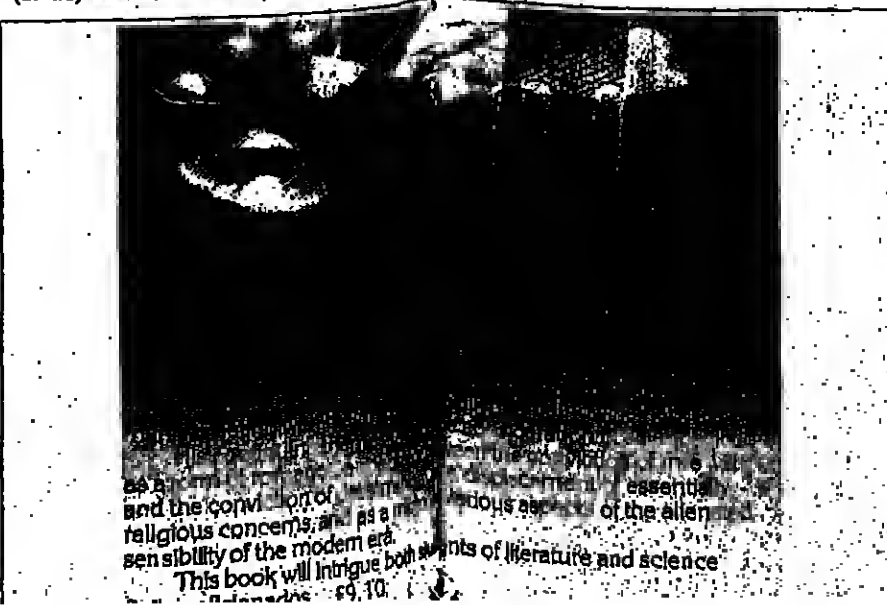
Field Day's first production was of Brian Friel's *Translations*, arguably the single most important piece of writing to come out of Ireland in the last ten years. I can think of no contemporary Irish writer who has so boldly and delicately explored the complexities of the Irish mind, or displayed such an understanding of the relationship between land and language. In his previous play, *Arcturians*, Friel demonstrated a Chekhovian ability to allow the 'piddling little things' of day-to-day life to illuminate much larger issues. His technical facility is such that he can convince his audience that most of the characters in *Translations* are communicating through the medium of Irish, whereas they are in reality speaking English. He now brings his gifts to bear on a reworking of *Three Sisters*.

This is neither a direct translation from the Russian, nor a reworking of the basic scenario on the lines of Thomas Kilroy's *The Seagull*, set in nineteenth-century Galway. Friel's procedure here has been to plot a course among the various translat-

'that's a wild big crowd', 'as thick as poundies' - which seems incongruous, there's nothing remarkably 'Irish', nothing obviously provincial.

The direction by Stephen Rea is unobtrusive, and the performances are by and large self-effacing. Sorcha Cusack and Eileen Pollock are strong as Olga and Masha. I wasn't quite so convinced by Owen Guinness's rather insympathetic Irina, nor by James Ellis's exaggeratedly swaggering Vershinin. Nuala Hayes makes a marvellously scatter-brained Natasha, while Niall Buggy and Eamon Kelly are excellent as Fyodor and Chebutyko. John Quinlan's account of Andrey Prozorov is never entirely credible, but Michael Duffy presents a masterful cameo as Fers-Pont.

Three Sisters can be seen at Portadown (Oct 6), Coleraine (7-10), Galway (12-14), Cork (15-17), Tralee (19-21) and Limerick (22-24).



This book will intrigue both devotees of literature and science.

commentary

Action and acting...

By Ray Ockenden

Mephisto
Round House Theatre

Ariane Mnouchkine's play, given in Barry Russell's translation, is based on an uneven novel of 1936 by Klaus Mann. The fact that this *roman à clef* is currently a best-seller in Germany is due less to its inherent merits than to its status as a banned book: its central character, Höfgen, was so transparently based on the career of the actor Gustav Gründgens that it provoked numerous lawsuits. Mnouchkine, while also contributing to the novel's fame, takes a wider perspective on Weimar Germany. Alongside Höfgen's evolution from communist sympathizer to idol of the Nazi establishment she brings out the differing responses to political events of other figures who are associated with a Hamburg theatre and its offshoot, a radical cabaret. Mann himself, under a different name, is a character in the play who moves uncertainly from being an epitome of bourgeois *jeunesse dorée* to an anti-fascist stance; meanwhile a young Nazi actor rebels when he discovers that his party, having appeared to espouse the workers' cause, betrays them once it gains power.

The play is not just another Cabaret; it is a direct statement about the simple and difficult issues of choice and commitment, attitudes and action. Above all, it is a play about theatre and the problem of its relationship to life. From the decadence of a Klaus Mann play, an extract from which is acted out with arch sensuality, we move to the harshness of revolutionary cabaret, with its Chaplinesque mime of Hitler and satire on political realities. After the wistful scene in which Thomas Mann and his family, hosts to the playwright Stenheim, recite from memory the closing lines of *The Cherry Orchard*, we see Höfgen playing Goethe's Mephisto in a glittering gala performance attended by Goering.

Both the disillusioned Nazi and those who compromise with Hitler insist that they are merely actors. On the other hand, the radically engaged actors are constantly troubled by their sense of impotence to effect change in the real world, and can also be blind to actual dangers. Should they bother to take Hitler seriously, the cabaret artists wonder? When the Jewish actress opes on political grounds for exile in Russia rather than America, we know she is going to her death as surely as those who continue their communist cabaret while the Nazis take power. No easy answers are offered to the questions about art and reality which the play poses.

The two halves of the performance are effectively contrasted. The first seems to hover, as if uncertain of its aim; in the second, its disparate elements are suddenly focused by the Nazi take-over, and the need for choice and commitment, attitudes and action. Above all, it is a play

about theatre and the problem of its relationship to life. From the decadence of a Klaus Mann play, an extract from which is acted out with arch sensuality, we move to the harshness of revolutionary cabaret, with its Chaplinesque mime of Hitler and satire on political realities. After the wistful scene in which Thomas Mann and his family, hosts to the playwright Stenheim, recite from memory the closing lines of *The Cherry Orchard*, we see Höfgen playing Goethe's Mephisto in a glittering gala performance attended by Goering.

The stage is dominated by a large gantry, which in the second part becomes a railway-bridge, a meeting-place for the outcasts and opponents of the new régime. The play's most moving scene is enacted here: the last conversation of a couple (she Jewish, he loyal to her) before they jump to their death. Beneath the trains pass: expresses to Berlin and cattle-trucks to the labour and concentration camps.

Gordon McDougall's taut direction and the versatility of the talented Oxford Playhouse Company carry off short scenes, the brisk transitions. Shedding the sometimes ungrateful Klaus Mann role, Clive Wood turns into a comic and chilling Hitler. From the band which plays Terry Mortimer's music (the Wall pastiches are appropriate and skilful) there emerge the cabaret communists (David Carley and the excellent Neil Phillips). The inseparable bright young things (Alyson Spiro and Laura Davenport), after play-acting convent lesbians, find themselves living out political roles at opposite ends of the spectrum. As Höfgen, Lao McDiarmid is called upon to

borrowed from Erika Mann) which satirizes anti-semitic propaganda by diagnosing the telephone as the root of all evils in the state, is echoed in a later scene when the bourgeois chagrined surroundings, recoil from the telephone as they realize how, in a totalitarian state, it is a means for authority to monitor their conversations.

The end of the play sets a nagging question-mark over Klaus Mann's position (and with it his father's; perhaps Brecht's too). Can one work against evil from a safe distance? Paradoxically, it is Höfgen who asserts that the real front line is in Germany itself; but there the only choice is between ugly death, suicide and compromise. Theatre, too, is a kind of safe distance. The silence of the audience which greeted the play's mute epilogue (placards are mounted on the stage, commemorating writers who were victims of totalitarianism) was more eloquent comment than the awkward applause which eventually followed. Once again, questions about theatre were being posed, this time in the auditorium itself.

With its size and shape, The Round House lends itself less well to the Company's style than the Oxford Playhouse did, diffusing some of the intensity of earlier performances; but the evening remains a moving and challenging experience. If the empty seats in the house suggested the relative unpopularity of political theatre, the play continues to remind audiences (and actors) that we may prefer an exclusive diet of 'pure' theatre at our peril.

... and action and thought

By Alan Jenkins

Good
Warehouse Theatre

A musical about the Third Reich? The Night of the Broken Glass, 'euthanasia' and Auschwitz, with songs?

The misgivings went on as the lights went down. Had the RSC experienced a collective brainstorm? Or, on the contrary, had they perpetrated a masterly insurance fraud? A Blatant and Bloom in *The Producers*? In fact C. P. Taylor's new play is more *Cabaret* than *Springtime for Hitler*, and more Brecht than *Adolf* (as does Chaplin's Dictator) but the resplendent rise is observed through the other end of the telescope, so to speak, from just outside the charmed circle of power, and with a conspicuously innocent eye.

The eye belongs to Haldor, a university professor of literature, a thoughtful, lustful, ambitious and costly domestic creature whose career becomes entangled with that of the SS and follows a similar curve towards the pit of cruelty - a process which baffles only its protagonist.

Haldor suffers guilt for having half-abandoned his senile mother to an institution. His marriage to a charming, child-like but slutish musician is going to the dogs. He takes his anger and his sexual problems to the Jewish psychiatrist (analyst?) Maurice, whose slowly-dawning fears of Armageddon he blithely dismisses. Maurice equally blithely assures his friend that all his problems can be put down to what he calls (there is no hint of clinical understanding in Joe Malla's performance, though this is partly the fault of the script) 'neurosis'. Haldor's affair with a beautiful young student is fuelled by a few private tutorials on the 'relevance' of *Faust*. And his writings - particularly on the problem of the old, infirm 'useless' - have attracted interest in powerful quarters.

From the study of Goethe he falls into the arms of Goering and Goebbels. He is soon part of the propaganda machine, leading his clear-headed human sympathies (exercised initially on his mother) to the programme for 'euthanasia'. Sexual prowess returns for Anne's sake, but what has been repressing returns with it: a hint of a *Faust* parallel suggests itself, as Haldor regains the world at the cost of his soul.

There are two linking, glaringly ironic strands. One is that he is unaware of what is happening to him until the symptoms are manifested in obsessive wringing of hands, facial twitching and the rest. The other derives from the more innocent fantasy which reveals a 'neurosis' from the beginning at moments of crisis. Haldor hears a band playing in his head - all kinds of band, all kinds of music; which, psychologically accept-

where he has been sent to inspect and report on conditions, he hears the prisoners' band strike up - so successfully has he managed his screening-out of the horror in which he has unwittingly or half-wittingly played his part - is as nothing to this overwhelming occurrence. It is a real band. He is 'cured' at precisely the moment when he is affectively damned.

There are other ironies, all of them grim, all of them familiar. We have heard and seen a good deal about the process by which the appalling becomes thinkable, then acceptable, and gradually lovable. But there are too many real horrors dealt out by this play for any reviewer to be able to yield to knowledge for long. C. P. Taylor is, anyway, less interested in stirring pity for the sufferers and victims than in provoking reflection on the monsters and torturers. His play sets out to be thoroughly didactic. For the grimest irony is how an intelligent, though innocent, bemused and apparently ineffectual man like Haldor, succumbs, with something approaching gratitude, to the gruesome distortion of his works and aims which is effected by the SS to further their own. Such collusion may spring from deeply buried psychological sources, and a few are canvassed: the overriding need for love and acceptance, the talismanic virtue of a uniform and so on. But Taylor implies that the real causes are ignorance, blindness, self-delusion, a fatal misreading of historical reality and a failure to grasp the sub-plot of history, the meaning of directions taken by events. Inflation, growing militarism, the deadly words of Hitler, all the sinister stage-management of a circus whose public theatre provided the spectacle of bestial, burning, looting and killing - all this was obvious enough, so how is it that Haldor can rationalize it as something not to be taken seriously? And how, when the full

The play moves fast, and its collage of songs and speech of pathos and crude irony or mockery - not far from the caricature of political cabaret - its rapid alternation between scenes, between Haldor's fantasy world and the world of increasing violence, SS men and sexual bliss, are all deftly managed. Alas Howard is - despite some overworking of the face to suggest pained incomprehension or blank bewilderment - brilliant and compelling, particularly in the closing scenes of horrific self-awareness. Joe Malla struggles with an impoverished role, but his is a wasted opportunity. More important, surely, than these details of entertainment-value, is not just the residual sense of triviality which surrounds such a orifice when

asked, it is not answered in any coherent way. Haldor readily believes Anne - the student for whom he has deserted his wife - when she insists 'We are good people. Good people'. Of course: such people as they in fact are seldom believe otherwise. The point is easily scored, but are we to adduce from Taylor's having scored it that he regards the civilized, 'humane' intellectual's political innocence as automatically self-aggrandizing, hypocritical, contemptible? There is no 'good' in any of the characters in his play, though all invoke extenuating circumstances in their favour; the problem, dramatically, is that this moral ambivalence precipitates a circularity, and a profound ambiguity, in the play itself. In such historical circumstances as Haldor's, 'good' is not a matter of conscience, of scruple and dwelling on the event: it is shown only in action. Acting as Haldor does, a man automatically forfeits his claim to be 'good'. This is clear enough, but it is easy to feel that Taylor has, by the simple expedient of his title, added the semblance of a problematical moral dimension to what is a very different and, given the immensity of the crime, a more superficial argument.

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to the editor

Nikolay Zabolotsky

Sir, - It was entirely proper for R. R. Milner-Gulland (September 11) to defend Zabolotsky, with whose work he is far more conversant than I am, against imputations that he regarded as manifestly wrong. Memoirists in the situation of Chukovskaya and Roskina tend to be very severe in their judgments, though Roskina writes of Zabolotsky with a profound sense of what was tragic in his life.

The one "weak poem" that I analysed, "rather mischievously" in Mr Milner-Gulland's view, did indeed contain the lines that I quoted as patently false. I was not guilty of any factual error - whereas Miss Lisa Tustly (Letters, August 28) had reason to rebuke me for confusing the two elenchos, though this regrettable but not vital slip hardly affected my argument. The point I wished to make was that Zabolotsky could not plead the same justification for his insincerity that Akhmatova could when she wrote in praise of Stalin to save her son's life.

His verse may not have been widely recognized in 1957, but he does not seem to have met with much difficulty in publishing poems at that time, and the clarity and ease of his manner did indeed make his poetry acceptable, even if acceptance had earlier been delayed. The later poems are often pleasing, but Chukovskaya is, I believe, right when she detects a lack of vitality in his classicism. And at least one poem of 1957, "Bolero", dedicated to Ravel, disturbs me as did "Creators of Roads", when he writes:

Alas, incanted Madrid has fallen silent,
All in echoes of the storm blown by,
And it no longer has Dolores

I should have thought that the consciousness of himself as an "eminent

Soviet poet" lay behind that reference to La Pasquaria.

Manuscripts sent in a celebrated poem: "Do not compare. A living man is incomparable." But it seems to me, and Roskina supports this impression, that Zabolotsky in his later poems was not a living man to the end in the sense that Pasternak was in his poetry of the same years. There is a diminution, and I think an evasion. Roskina, of course, like Nadezhda Mandelstam, writes as a rigorist, invoking the spirit of Juri Palach. In my article I sought to imply that these dilemmas of the Russian poet were neither remote nor exaggerated. The state of the world today brings them intolerably close to our own literature.

HENRY GIFFORD,
10 Hyland Grove, Bristol BS9 3NR.

See article on pp 1179-81.

'Georgiana'

Sir, - In his review of *Georgiana* by Brian Masters (September 25), A. N. Wilson attributes to Lady Elizabeth Foster a non-existent illegitimate daughter, and goes even further to charge the Duke's doctors with gouging out her eye.

If he had been familiar with the literature of his subject, he would have noted with surprise the following passage (p 98):

At the time (October and early November 1782), something more murky was suspected, in view of the Duke's evident attachment to Bess. The suspicion has endured for two hundred years. True, Elizabeth did become the Duke's mistress before long, but to suggest, as one recent account has, that all three went to bed together at Plympton, is unwarranted speculation....

A footnote to the passage quoted above states:

Arthur Calder-Marshall, in *The Two Duchesses* (1978), advances the theory that the Duke was excited by Elizabeth in order to effect penetration with Georgiana. There is no evidence that the Duke and Duchess had a "sexual problem"; indeed she was pregnant before without difficulty on his part. Any man who has attempted coition by this means may well think it unlikely to produce results.

Mr Masters's enunciation of my "theory" is totally false. I argued that the propriety of Lady Elizabeth enabled the Duke to "renew the ardours" with his wife, which had lapsed since the 1784 "Tête-à-Tête" article in *The Town and Country Magazine* had forced him to give up his milliner mistress. At no time, do I suggest, or believe, that the three ever went to bed together.

Mr Masters states that Lady Elizabeth became the Duke's mistress "before long". How long is "before long"? They first met in London (not Bath, as Mr Masters affirms) on May 22, 1782. The evidence of Lady Elizabeth's journal makes it clear that they did not become physical lovers, at least until the summer of 1784. In my view they did not have intercourse until November of that year: two-and-a-half years after their first meeting.

I challenged Mr Masters to show me "the recent account". At first, he said that his papers were too dispersed for him to find the source, but after much hawking he replied that someone in the New York Public Library (whose name he could not divulge) had shown him in confidence a short unpublished typescript by someone he could not remember, making the Plympton assertion, which he felt it necessary to mention, though he considered it nonsense. Perhaps some TLS reader in the New York Public Library can vouch for this improbable document? Meanwhile, I shall continue to believe that it was a means to introduce the footnote.

Mr Masters tells me that he had already almost finished his biography, when he read *The Two Duchesses* in November 1978. He decided to wait until the Melbourne (Lamb) Papers had been made public by the British Library before attempting publication. By that time, with luck, *The Two Duchesses* would have been forgotten. As it has been, except by its still surviving author.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL,
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'Labyrinths'

Sir, - Rather than have the Penguin edition of *Labyrinths* withdrawn, I should have preferred if your correspondent Philip Hobsbaum (Letters, September 25) had decided not to contribute to a debate for which he seems ill-prepared. I James Irbys was not responsible for translating "Denit and the Comas". His co-translator Donald Yates was. 21 Borges's preference for the language of abstraction and his delight in etymologies mean that his writings, as, consequently, translations of his writings, do, at first, seem odd, but not at all nonsensical. Your readers may decide whether Irbys/Yates or di Giovanni have translated best "la numerada divisibilidad de una cárcel", "la unánime noche", "las infinitas aldeas", "el flanco violento de la montaña". Philip Hobsbaum's particular criticisms of the renditions of the above Spanish betray an ignorance of Spanish, or of Borges, or both.

C. B. COSGROVE,
Department of Spanish, University of Dublin, Arts Building, Trinity College, Dublin 2.

Among this week's contributors

ROSEMARY ASHTON's *The Gernian* (1922-1939) vol. IX / Chippell's *Storia d'Italia* a Jumeil. Della Stato liberato all'Italia fascista (1918-1925) vol. IV / Roehel Gili arditi della grande guerra / Vaccarino Storia della resistenza in Europa (1938-1945), i paesi dell'Europa centrale: Germania, Austria, Cecoslovacchia, Polonia / Vedute Autura La classe operaia durante il fascismo

PAUL BAILEY's most recent novel is *Old Soldiers*, 1980.

ROBERT BEATON is the author of *Folk Poetry in Modern Greece*, 1971, and *Nietzsche*, 1974.

CHRISTOPHER BOLLAS is a psychoanalyst practising in London.

WILLIAM BOYD's novel *A Good Man in Africa* was published earlier this year.

ALAN BROWNJOHN's most recent collection of poems is *A Night in the Gazebo*, 1980.

ITALO CALVINO's most recent novel, *If on a winter's night a traveller*, was published earlier this year.

K. Z. CIESZKOWSKI is a librarian at the Tate Gallery.

RICHARD COOMBS is the editor of the British Film Institute's *Monthly Bulletin*.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM is the editor of *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 1980.

MASANOBU D'AMICO is Professor of English at the University of Rome.

C. S. E. DAVIES is the author of *Peace, Print and Protestantism 1450-1558*, 1976.

JOHN A. DAVIS is the author of *Economy and Society in Bourbon Naples*, 1981.

RAYMOND DAWSON's books include *Imperial China*, 1972.

D. J. ENRIGHT's most recent collection of poems is *A Faust Book*, 1979.

PETER HADFIELD's most recent book is *The Pagan Year*, 1981.

R. J. HOLLNADAL's books include *Thomas Mann: A Critical Study*, 1971, and *Nietzsche*, 1974.

OLYV HUGHES's collections of poems include *Best of Neighbours*, 1979.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French Literature at University College London.

JAMES JOLL's books include *Intellectuals in Politics*, 1960, and *Graustel*, 1977.

JOHN KEEGAN's books include *The Face of Battle*, 1976.

PATRICK MCCARTHY is the author of *Celine*, 1975.

ANNOLO McMILLIN is the author of *A History of Byelorussian Literature*, 1977.

PETER MACKEN's *The Coward of Mind: the Affair of Lord George Sackville* was published in 1979.

TIM MASON teaches Modern History at St Peter's College, Oxford, and is an editor of *History Workshop Journal*.

ROBIN MILNER-GULLAND is Reader in Russian Studies at the University of Sussex.

ANDREW MOTTON's most recent collection of poems is *The Pleasure Steamer*, 1978.

PAUL MULDOON's most recent collection of poems, *Why Brownies Left*, was published in 1980.

OSWYN MURRAY is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS is the author of *William Empson and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*, 1978.

PATRICK O'CONNOR is the editor and publisher of *A Tribute to Yvonne Rainer*, 1978.

RAY OCKENROEN is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

STUART PARKES is a lecturer in Modern Languages at Sheffield City Polytechnic.

IRIS PARRY was Professor of German at Manchester University from 1963 to 1978.

PHILIP PAYNE is a lecturer in German at the University of Lancaster.

MORRIS PHILIPPSON is the Director of Chicago University Press. He is the author of the novels *Bourgeois Anonymous*, 1964, *The Wallpaper Box*, 1976, and *A Man in Charge*, 1979.

S. S. PRAWER's books include *Karl Marx and World Literature*, 1976.

BRIAN RANFT was Professor of History at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, from 1966 to 1977.

CHRISTOPHER REID's collection of poems *Arctia* was published in 1979.

JOSEPH RYCKWERT's books include *The First Modern: the Architects of the Eighteenth Century*, 1980.

LORNA SABA teaches Literature at the University of East Anglia.

JON SILKIN's most recent collection of poems is *The Psalms and their Spoils*, 1980.

CLIVE SINGLAI's *The Brothers Singer*, a study of Isaac Bashevis and Israel Joshua Singer, will be published early next year.

C. H. SISSON's translation of the *Divine Comedy* appeared in 1980.

DAN SPERBER's most recent book, *Le Savor des Anthropologues*, will be published in 1982.

GEORGE STEINER's books include *Heidegger and On Difficulty and Other Essays*, both 1978. His novel *The Forging of San Cristobal* of A. H. was published earlier this year.

JILL STEPHENSON's *The Nazi Organization of Women* was published earlier this year.

NORMAN STONE is the author of *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 1976.

ANTHONY STORR's most recent book is *The Art of Psychotherapy*, 1979.

D. M. THOMAS's most recent novel is *The White Hotel*, 1981.

RALEIGH TREVELYAN's *Rome 44: The Battle for the Eternal City* will be published next week.

EUOEN WARREN is Dean of the College of Letters and Science in the University of California, Los Angeles.

JOHN WRIGHTMAN is the author of *The Concept of the Avant-Garde: Explorations in Modernism*, 1973.

M. E. YATZ's books include *Singularity of British India: Iran and Afghanistan 1798-1850*, 1980.

W. E. YATZ's *Tradition in the German Sonnet* was published earlier this year.

to the editor

'The Proms and Natural Justice'

Sir, - Richard Osborne's long but inattentive review of *The Proms and Natural Justice* (September 25) needs correction. It has been repeatedly necessary to indicate to people who seem unfamiliar with it that the term "natural justice" is quite common parlance and well respected in human law, denoting what most reasonable people naturally regard as equitable behaviour. The use of ethical terms in this book is very exact.

In drawing attention to the manifest dangers of prolonged personal monopoly in the disposal of public funds, and in pointing out that the BBC Music Controller's individual control of every detail of the Proms was due, not to a decision by the BBC management, but to a unilateral assumption of powers by William Glock, I was in no sense casting the management "in the role of a cryptically disinterested Renaissance ruler". In the same sentence your reviewer suggests that I regard this body as consisting of "libertine entrepreneurs". It appears to be Mr Osborne who should consider his terminology.

He surmises that some kind of melodramatic "power struggle" is going on. He must please believe me when I say that my interest is only in the rights and wrongs of the matter; to speak offensively of "moral posturing" is unfair, and assumptive. He more than infers that I am disingenuous, but is not himself frank enough to mention that Sir Adrian Boult, in a very clear foreword, strongly shares my views, nor does he mention that my own "moral posturing" resulted in the refusal of a Prom commission for a symphony (for the 1981 season), so as to maintain absolute consistency of behaviour as well as argument (see *The Times*, July 17).

With the innuendoes come distortions. I did not "picture" Glock in a "dramatic scenario" when I wrote with slight irony "no one but he can know how far he agonized over the choice", despite the book shows the consistent respect and admiration for Sir William. Further, my belief that Henry Wood, who began the Proms when they were not run on public money, and who conducted them in *alto*, was the only man ever to have had the right permanently to determine their content, does not render the moral indefensibility of a later takeover "an adaptable phenomenon".

The list of composers neglected by Glock is not, as Mr Osborne intrepidly asserts, of those "of whom Simpson personally approves". Where is this stated in this book? Some of the composers Glock favoured owe much to him, and by the same token there were others who owe to him a perhaps temporary but too prolonged eclipse. There are on that list composers who arouse my antipathy, and I might have been tempted to neglect them myself had I been unfortunately in sole charge of the Proms. But if I had been replaced in three or five years, some of the danger would have been averted. Equity in this matter is not egalitarianism; but composers or performers should not be exposed to a situation that favours indefinitely only the decisions of one entrenched selector.

The case made in the book was not "fomented" by the Composers' Guild of Great Britain. My views have been known for many years. They were placed in detail before the BBC while I was on the staff, in 1977, after Robert Penson had tried to suppress them (see *The Listener*, September 17). There is no cause for Mr Osborne to assume these views either secondhand or dishonest - in sending "a disingenuous note" in my remark that I had no personal stake in the matter he is on dangerous ground. There is, moreover, no proposal in my book for "a scheme in which such Guilds, Associations and other pressure groups

with partial aims would be expected to have a decisive say".

Your reviewer then finds "sinister" the idea that the BBC should make full use of its own resources, apart from his opinion of the orchestras, whose potentialities far exceed his apparent imagination, he seems to see some threat in the fact that this would give the planner great command of repertoire (and what is wrong with "command" of repertoire?) The proposal is that the BBC should show the vision, courage, and will to create the conditions in which its own orchestras could rise to their true potential, much greater than Jeremiahs would have us believe. It is wrong to assume that my radical scheme obliges me "to sel about defending the quality of the BBC's provincial orchestras". It is the BBC that should be defending and enhancing, not trying to abolish or run down, these orchestras, and the best conductors could be satisfied.

The greatest asset to a planner of programmes is freedom. Freedom is best possible when the resources available can do what is required. At present the Proms are too often restricted by external circumstances - especially by what other organizations can offer or have already presented. Freedom is essential for real vital planning; it would produce Mr Osborne's coldly diabolic nightmare only if the planner were such a person, and it would be up to the BBC to find those who were not, the periodic change of planner proving a salutary safeguard in this as in most other respects. Coherent programmes are not performed moribund; Henry Wood's scheme, in its time, was responsible for countless grateful people becoming systematically familiar with the repertoire. In representing these ideas as "Eastern European", the reviewer is merely forcing irrelevant political overtones on the reader.

The final distortion comes with "Simpson bemoans the modern composer's lack of easy rapport with his audience". Far from this, the last chapter tries to explain the common suspicion of the modern composer, namely that the book is a manual, the public responsible. It is not "paranoia about institutions" (the terms he uses) that makes me think desirable (without servitude) Haydn's enviable familiarity with an audience, or caused me to try to follow a friend's description of the kind of symphony he would like to hear. This "solution" seems to me less "odd" than Mr Osborne's strangely determined explanation. His review as a whole is strangely determined, in fact, and not very nice, and the term denotes accuracy as well as pleasantness. I hope he will see that, like mine or any others, his views may be open to misunderstanding.

ROBERT SIMPSON,
Cedar Cottage, Charsley, Bucks HP18 0DA.

Novel-Publishing

Sir, - Kingsley Amis's article on the importunities of Arbutnot ("How to get your novel published", October 2) will strike a sympathetic chord in the heart of every writer.

One way of dealing with such requests is to return a printed card listing the things writers cannot do for non-writers or would-be writers. This impersonal approach removes the sting of a written refusal, and the importuner is not heard from again (just as one never hears again from those correspondents for whom one goes to considerable trouble).

There are, however, some correspondents regarding whom not only words but cards fail. I received the following letter last month; only the names have been changed to protect the guilty. After the usual perfunctory butterflying, to which Mr Amis refers, the importuner continues:

"I am in the process of writing science fiction and have recently ap-

plied for a grant from the Prince Charles Trust to help with the finances of preparing the work to be sent to the publishers.

"But I need to know the costs of each stage of the process and what these individual stages are. Also how do I present my works? How do I obtain copyrights? What does the Arts Council do? And the address of British and American publishers of science fiction.

"When I have finished my own stories I will send you copies and I would like to know what you think of them."

After much thought, I have written back suggesting that perhaps Mr Kingsley Amis would be better able to assist him in his career.

BRIAN W. ALDISS,
16 Moreton Road, Oxford OX2 7AX.

Classical America

Sir, - In his impatience with the Classical America Edition of Hector d'Espouy's *Plates, Fragments from Greek and Roman Architecture* (September 11), Robin Middleton appears to be caught in the trap of art history. He wants a heavy compendium larded with footnotes. How else explain his total incomprehension of the edition's purpose? Your readers may be interested in knowing that, as part of the Classical America Series in Art and Architecture, the d'Espouy is a text for those who want to learn to design in the classical.

It should be explained that Classical America offers two courses, one in the freehand drawing and the other in the drafting of the classical, both in Philadelphia and New York. It is an excellent instruction in the arts being offered in England or, for that matter, in any European country?

John Blatteau, whose introduction your reviewer derides, addressed himself successfully to the purpose, namely that the book is a manual. What is more, so appreciative has the public been of this beautiful book that Classical America is preparing an edition of H. Van Buren Magonigle's *Architectural Rendering in Wash. The Magonigle* is the best on the technique adopted by d'Espouy and his fellow pensionnaires at the Académie de France à Rome in the last century.

Your reviewer's treatment of Christiane Sears's introduction is equally cavalier and equally uncomprehending. The only accessible biography of d'Espouy is in the *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, and that is very inadequate. No one in New York knew of his murder in the stairwell of the James A. Burden mansion until Mme Sears made possible its identification. Not only did she survey the man's work but she told something of the man. She gives us a glimpse into the life of an established artist at the turn of the century when she reveals that he was a frequent guest at the Elisee. What artist today has such ready access to a presidential or royal palace?

As for Classical America being a "propaganda" organization, of course it is! Clearly stated in its publications is the fact that "Classical America is a society founded to encourage the classical tradition in the arts of the United States".

This does not mean that the society limits its interest to this side of the Atlantic. The society was the first to publish, in *Classical America* IV (William A. Coles, editor), the work of Quinlan Terry, one of the rare breed of a contemporary English architect working in the classical mode.

HENRY HOPE REED,
H. STAFFORD BRYANT, JR.,
General Editors of the Classical America Series in Art and Architecture, Box 821, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10036.

Festival Reviews

Sir, - I would like to reply to the comments on my Edinburgh festival reviews. Michael Holroyd (Letters, October 2) denies having said that television could not be emotionally involving, during the debate on television and literature in St Cecilia's Hall. He knows what he thinks he said; I know what I think I heard. As I noted during the debate, Holroyd's contention that television did not involve the audience on a "profound level" led to an impassioned counterclaim by Melvyn Bragg that he has been "profoundly engaged" by television plays, poems on broadsheets, novels, etc: his point being that involvement depends on the quality of the thing itself, not on the medium. Incidentally, the view that Michael Holroyd propounded in his letter, that "radio is a more sympathetic medium to books than television", is one for which I have a great respect.

Robert Cushman accuses me (Letters, October 2), more seriously, of having made mistakes in my review of the musical *Candide*. I was, indeed, quite wrong to have assumed that Sondheim had made musical additions to the score, and for this I'm sorry, though Mr Cushman's claim that Bernstein's music for *Candide* is better than his score of *West Side Story* seems to me a matter of opinion rather than fact. I did make it clear in my review that I was only hazarding a guess when I took the line "I have no strong objection to champagne" to be Dorothy Parker's, and I'm interested to learn from Robert Cushman that it was, in fact, Richard Wilbur's. But I am right, I think, about the happy ending. It is true that at the very end Candide's pantomime cow drops dead, and the Voltairian Pangloss commentator claims over it: "The poet! But this (at least in Birmingham Rep's cheery production) is a comic pay-off line, and doesn't seriously threaten the blithe reunion of Candide and the still-lovely Cunegonde, and their enthusiastic resolutions for a life of work, all of which is a far cry from the sober ruthlessness of Voltaire's ending."

HERMIONE LEE,
Department of English, University of York, Heslington, York.

'Heaven's Gate'

Sir, - Richard Combs, in his review of *Heaven's Gate* (Commentary, September 18), describes it as based on "the Johnson County War of 1892 in which immigrant settlers in Wyoming were set upon by hired killers of the cattlemen's association".

While this is in no doubt what the cattlemen's association intended, what actually happened was that the settlers (who were no more "immigrants" than the cattlemen) set upon the hired killers with complete success, the latter being saved only by the US cavalry. Apart from the death of Nate Champion, the whole story is pure comedy.

C. P. COTTS,
21 Campion Road, Putney, London SW15.

Other Men's Clerihews

Sir, - As a sequel to *The Complete Clerihews of E. Clerihew Bentley*, published by the Oxford University Press, I am engaged on the collection of material for a companion volume, *Other Men's Clerihews*, which will be devoted entirely to clerihews not by Bentley.

If anybody can supply any of these, or write some for me, I should be very grateful.

GAVIN EWART,
57 Kenilworth Court, Lower Richmond Road, London SW15 1EN.

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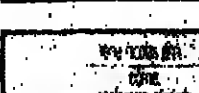
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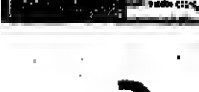
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BODLEY HEAD

commentary

Grey beard and glittering eye

By K. Z. Cieszkowski

Thomas Carlyle 1795-1881
National Portrait Gallery

Whereas the large centenary exhibition at the National Library of Scotland set out to document Carlyle's life and writings, with a wealth of manuscripts and letters and other documents from the Library's own holdings and elsewhere, the smaller display at the National Portrait Gallery in London concentrates solely on portraiture. Any ancillary documentation in a small selection of books and letters, in particular illustrating Carlyle's relationship with the NPG - a medallion portrait of Carlyle appears on the facade of the Gallery, above the entrance - is offered rather as an afterthought. What is important is the image of the man - a portraitist's dream.

The early, beardless Carlyle was delineated by John Linnell (an impossibly romantic portrait dating from 1834-4) and Samuel Laurence - the fine portrait by Laurence is in a private collection, but is reproduced on the cover of the Edinburgh catalogue. The outstanding feature of Carlyle's face at this time was the tight-lipped mouth, the lower lip thrust forward sharply to give him a firm and intransigent expression. Carlyle's beard, once grown (for the most curious of reasons - as an expression of solidarity with the sol-

diers then fighting in the Crimea), ranks high in the league-table of the most eloquent in its presentation of the man, bearing as it does a great sense of dignity and solid grandeur. The gloom is replaced by an intellectual vitality, and the sinner looks out with an expression of challenge and combativeness - the face is moulded in thick broad strokes, but the hands have been left unfinished, only lightly sketched in, clasping the head of a walking cane. In Helen Allingham's small watercolour, Carlyle seems dominated by his surroundings - furniture, portraits of Cromwell and Luther, etc.

The photographs fix the features sufficiently to suggest that Watts's portrait failed to achieve a likeness, and one of the Julia Margaret Cameron photographs (from the Herschel album - the craggy face emerging from darkness, invested with great mystery and a deep silence) is one of the most powerful images of Carlyle, and certainly the finest of her photographs.

In addition to portraits of Carlyle, there is a small gallery of portraits of Carlyle's heroes - Dante, Cromwell, Frederick the Great, Luther, Napoleon, Samuel Johnson, Burns - but no Robert Peel, in fact no contemporary heroes at all. The display takes its cue from the *On Heroes* lectures, and could be accused of grossly simplifying Carlyle's ideas by transforming them into simple hero-worship. However, the catalogue adds the nuances to this simplification.

As regards the later portraits, it is impossible to do more than just speculate on who got it right - Carlyle's own judgement cannot be relied on too much, as he was notoriously erratic in his valuation in pictorial matters. Of the five major later portraits (Watts, Whistler, Millais, Robert Herdman and Boehm), Carlyle preferred Herdman's (on loan from the Scottish National Portrait Gallery) and hated Watts's (the second version of three is on display). In the case of the famous Whistler picture, Carlyle thought the artist had done a portrait of his clothes rather than of his features. Whistler's painting (originally 'Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2' - not a very flattering title from sitter's point of view) shows a profoundly sad and tired man, the expression vacant and melancholy in the extreme - but it is one of the

finest images of Carlyle that have come down to us. Millais's portrait is the most eloquent in its presentation of the man, bearing as it does a great sense of dignity and solid grandeur. The gloom is replaced by an intellectual vitality, and the sinner looks out with an expression of challenge and combativeness - the face is moulded in thick broad strokes, but the hands have been left unfinished, only lightly sketched in, clasping the head of a walking cane. In Helen Allingham's small watercolour, Carlyle seems dominated by his surroundings - furniture, portraits of Cromwell and Luther, etc.

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An 1875 aquatint of Carlyle by an unknown artist, from the exhibition reviewed here.

Plumbing the shallows

By David Profumo

The Beastly Beatitudes of
Balthazar B.
Duke of York's Theatre

J. P. Donleavy's association with the theatre has not always been fortunate, but this has characteristically not deterred him from presenting a stage adaptation of yet another of his novels, the richly comic *Balthazar B.* Unfortunately the task of funneling such an episodic book into a coherent play results in an untidy script. In spite of the comic strength of much of its dialogue, The first quarter of the novel, which deals beautifully with Balthazar's childhood, is excluded and the play opens in his student chambers in post-war Dublin, where he leads a lonely, elegant life away from his native France, engaged in the joint pursuits of Natural Sciences and the lovely Elizabeth Fitzdare, only to have his university career terminated after a sexual imbroglio organized by his old schoolfriend, the ebullient Beefe. After these adolescent shenanigans, the play disintegrates into a number of scenes set in and around London, illustrating Balthazar's eventual and unhappy marriage, and Beefe's mind-boggling sexual pursuits.

There are two major faults with this design. Firstly, the character of Balthazar is given very little scope for development, since the imaginative life which the novel affords him through its blend of first- and third-person narration is reduced to a few unsatisfactory reveries during the disruptive scene-changes. Despite his ideal stage-presence as Balthazar, therefore, Patrick Ryecart has little verbal ammunition with which to combat the disarmingly obscene performance of the beauteous Beefe, played by Simon Callow. As the kaleidoscopic, gospel according to Beefe unfolds, plumbing the shallows of sexual deviation (the prick is the palate of the soul), the play increasingly directs attention away

from its central figure and becomes a vehicle for the beastly beatitudes of Beefe, instead; his compulsive search for sin and his amazing professional misfortunes establish him as a personality of more interest than his diffident friend, and Simon Callow whisks through the part like a man possessed.

As Fitzdare, Susan Gilmore has to contend with the second problem, for her appearance is confined to the first part, yet her presence as the girl of Balthazar's fantasies must haunt the rest of the play. She is certainly alluring, but the tantalizing shyness of their courtship is sadly compressed into two scenes. This important sentimental axis to the plot fails to survive the second part, where Ron Daniels's direction gives undue prominence to a series of cameo episodes which bewilder the audience as much as the hero. The emphasis is on scenes of sexual titillation and force during which Balthazar struggles to keep in mind the memory of his former love, while participating fully in a number of romps: we see him emerge naked from his amours to confront a posse of voyeuristic neighbours, attend a live striptease show with Beefe, and attempt to seduce Alphonsine, played by Lizzy Romilly, an on-stage au pair who addresses the French-born Balthazar in a thick Parisian accent. Amid such a melée of encounters the adoration of Fitzdare necessarily loses credibility, and the pathos of the conclusion evaporates.

For addicts of Donleavy, this makes an infuriating evening, though the theatrical realization of Beefe as a lively libertine is a comic triumph, and Sue Formston's costume designs honour the book's constant sartorial details: the play itself lacks focus. Characters are introduced and then dropped, with little continuity, and while this does allow some splendid performances on stage (particularly Sylvia Colledge's indignant Lady Beefe and Noel Howlett's doddery Beefe), the overall shape resembles a series of revue sketches, entertaining, but ultimately inconsequential.

Lands and languages

By Paul Muldoon

Three Sisters
Grand Opera House, Belfast

This is the second production from the Field Day Theatre Company, established last year by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea with a view to bringing drama to towns throughout Ireland. *Three Sisters* opened in Derry's Guild Hall, itself the setting for Friel's play *The Freedom of the City*, and has been packing them in at Belfast's Grand Opera House, various centres throughout Ulster and more recently in the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival.

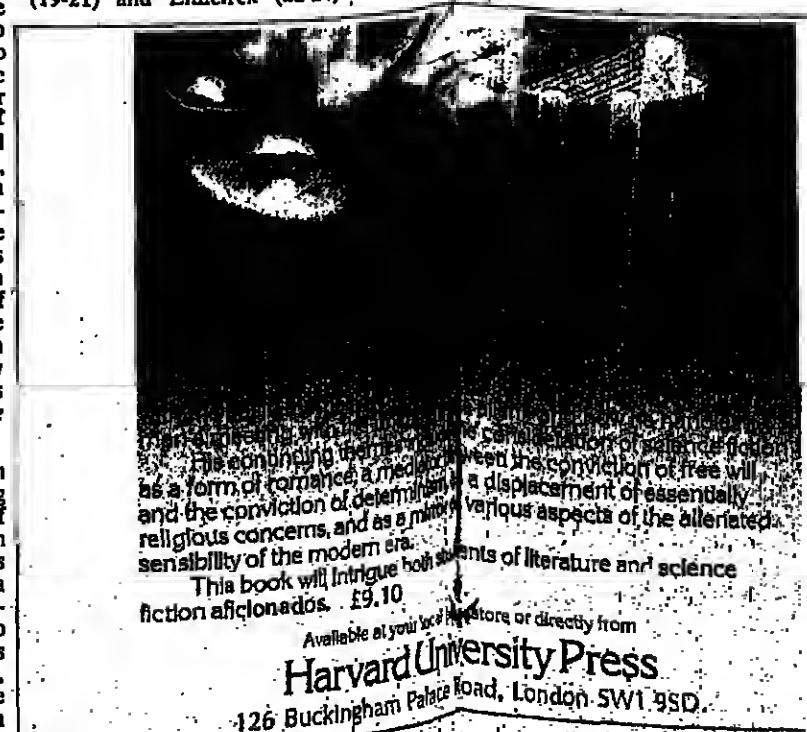
Field Day's first production was of Brian Friel's *Translations*, arguably the single most important piece of writing to come out of Ireland in the last ten years. I can think of no contemporary Irish writer who has so boldly and delicately explored the complexities of the Irish mind, or displayed such an understanding of the relationship between land and language. In his previous play, *Aristocrats*, Friel demonstrated a Chekhovian ability to allow the "piddling little things" of day-to-day life to illuminate much larger issues. His technical facility is such that he can convince his audience that most of the characters in *Translations* are communicating through the medium of Irish, whereas they are in reality speaking English. He now brings his gifts to bear on a reworking of *Three Sisters*.

This is neither a direct translation from the Russian, nor a reworking of the basic scenario on the lines of Thomas Kilroy's *The Seagull*, set in nineteenth-century Galway. Friel's procedure here has been to plot a course among the various translations available in English, and to offer his own re-reading of them. His rendering is fluent and serviceable, allowing the universal qualities of the play to shine through. Apart from the occasional idiomatic phrase -

"that's a wild big crowd", "as thick as poundies" - which seems incongruous, there's nothing remarkably "Irish", nothing obviously provincial.

The direction by Stephen Rea is unobtrusive, and the performances are by and large self-effacing. Sorcha Cusack and Eileen Pollock are strong as Olga and Mascha. I wasn't quite so convinced by Olwen Fouere's rather unsympathetic Irina, nor by James Ellis's exaggeratedly swaggering Vershinin. Nuala Hayes makes a marvellously scatter-brained Natasha, while Niall Buggy and Eamon Kelly are excellent as Tsvetkov and Chebutyko. Jobo Quina's account of Andrey Prozorov is never entirely credible, but Michael Duffy presents a masterful cameo as Fers-Pont.

Three Sisters can be seen at Portadown (Oct 6), Coleraine (7-10), Galway (12-14), Cork (15-17), Tralee (19-21) and Limerick (22-24).



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commentary

Action and acting...

By Ray Ockenden

Mephisto
Round House Theatre

Ariane Mnouchkine's play, given in Barry Russell's translation, is based on an uneven novel of 1936 by Klaus Mann. The fact that this *roman à clef* is currently a best-seller in Germany is due less to its inherent merits than to its status as a banned book: its central character, Höfgen, was so transparently based on the career of the actor Gustav Gründgens that it provoked numerous lawsuits. Mnouchkine, while also contributing to the novel's fame, takes a wider perspective on Weimar Germany. Alongside Höfgen's evolution from communist sympathizer to idol of the Nazi establishment she brings out the differing responses to political events of other figures who are associated with a Hamburg theatre and its offshoot, a radical cabaret. Mann himself, under a different name, is a character in the play who moves uncertainly from being an epitome of bourgeois *jeunesse dorée* to an anti-fascist stance; meanwhile a young Nazi actor rebels when he discovers that his party, having appeared to espouse the workers' cause, betrays them once it gains power.

The play is not just another Cabaret; it is a direct statement about the simple and difficult issues of choice and commitment, attitudes and action. Above all, it is a play

about theatre and the problem of its relationship to life. From the decadence of a Klaus Mann play, an extract from which is acted out with arch sensuality, we move to the harshness of revolutionary cabaret, with its Chaplinesque mime of Hitler and satire on political realities. After the wistful scene in which Thomas Mann and his family, hosts to the Maywright Sternheims, recite from memory the closing lines of *The Cherry Orchard*, we see Höfgen playing Goethe's Mephisto in a glittering gala performance attended by Goering.

Both the disillusioned Nazi and these who compromise with Hitler insist that they are merely actors. On the other hand, the radically engaged actors are constantly troubled by their sense of impotence to effect change in the real world, and can also be blind to actual dangers. Should they bother to take Hitler seriously, the cabaret artists wonder? When the Jewish actress opts on political grounds for exile in Russia rather than America, we know she is going to her death as surely as those who continue their communist cabaret while the Nazis take power. No easy answers are offered to the questions about art and reality which the play poses.

The two halves of the performance are effectively contrasted. The first seems to hover, as if uncertain of its aim; in the second, its disparate elements are suddenly focused by the Nazi take-over, and the need for choice. Individual scenes are tellingly related. The cabaret sketch

(borrowed from Erika Mann) which satirizes anti-semitic propaganda by diagnosing the telephone as the root of all evils in the state, is echoed in a later scene when the bourgeois characters, no longer secure in their elegant surroundings, recoil from the telephone as they realize how, in a totalitarian state, it is a means for authority to monitor their conversations.

The stage is dominated by a large gantry, which in the second part becomes a railway-bridge, a meeting-place for the outcasts and opponents of the new régime. The play's most moving scene is enacted here: the last conversation of a couple (the Jewish, he loyal to her) before they jump to their death. Beneath the trains pass: expresses to Berlin and fame for the opportunist Höfgen, cattle-trucks to the labour and concentration camps.

Gordon McDougall's true direction and the versatility of the talented Oxford Playhouse Company carry off short scenes, the brisk transitions. Shedding the sometimes ungrateful Klaus Mann role, Clive Wood turns into a comic and chilling Hitler. From the band which plays Terry Mortimer's music (the well pastiches are appropriate and skilful) there emerge the cabaret communists (David Cardy and the excellent Neil Phillips). The inseparable bright young things (Alyson Spiro and Laura Davenport), after play-acting convent lesbians, find themselves living out political roles at opposite ends of the spectrum. As Höfgen, Ian McDiarmid is called upon to

suggest the brittleness of the turn-of-century anti-semitic propaganda by diagnosing the telephone as the root of all evils in the state, is echoed in a later scene when the bourgeois characters, no longer secure in their elegant surroundings, recoil from the telephone as they realize how, in a totalitarian state, it is a means for authority to monitor their conversations.

The end of the play sets a nagging question-mark over Klaus Mann's position (and with it his father's; perhaps Dreht's too). Can one work against evil from a safe distance? Paradoxically, it is Höfgen who asserts that the real front line is in Germany itself; but there the only choice is between ugly death, suicide and compromise. Theatre, too, is a kind of safe distance. The silence of the audience which greeted the play's antic-apocalyptic placards are mounted on the stage, commemorating writers who were victims of totalitarianism) was more eloquent comment than the awkward applause which eventually followed. Once again, questions about theatre were being posed, this time in the auditorium itself.

With its size and shape, The Round House lends itself less well to the Company's style than the Oxford Playhouse did, diffusing some of the intensity of earlier performances; but the evening remains a moving and challenging experience. If the empty seats in the house suggested the relative unpopularity of political theatre, the play continues to remind audiences (and actors) that we may prefer an exclusive diet of "pure" theatre at our peril.

... and action and thought

By Alan Jenkins

Good
Warehouse Theatre

A musical about the Third Reich? The Night of the Broken Glass, "euthanasia" and Auschwitz, with songs?

The misgivings went on as the lights went down. Had the RSC experienced a collective brainstorm? Or, on the contrary, had they perpetrated a masterly insurance fraud *à la* Blaystock and Bloom in *The Producers*? In fact C. P. Taylor's new play is more Cabaret than *Springtime for Hitler*, and more Brecht than either. Arturo Ui looms behind this Adolf (as does Churchill's Dictator), but the resitable rise is observed through the other end of the telescope, so to speak, from just outside the charmed circle of power, and with a conspicuously innocent eye.

The eye belongs to Halder, a university professor of literature, a thoughtful, lustful, ambitious and cosily domestic creature whose career becomes entangled with that of the SS and follows a similar curve towards the pit of cruelty - a process which baffles only its protagonist.

Halder suffers guilt for having half-abandoned his senile mother to an institution. His marriage to a charming, child-like but shuttish musician is going tepid. He takes his angst and his sexual problems to the Jewish psychiatrist (analyst?) Maurice, whose slowly-dawning fears of Armageddon are blithely dismissed. Maurice equally blithely assures his friend that all his problems can be put down to what he calls (there is no hint of clinical understanding in Joe Melia's performance, though this is partly the fault of the script) "neurosis". Halder's afflictions, however young students are fuelled by the other end of the telescope, so to speak, from just outside the charmed circle of power, and with a conspicuously innocent eye.

There are two linking, glaringly ironic strands. One is that he is unaware of what is happening to him until the symptoms are manifested in obsessive wringing of hands, facial twitching and the rest. The other derives from the more innocent fantasy which reveals a "neurosis" from the beginning: at moments of crisis Halder hears a band playing in his head - all kinds of band, all kinds of music; which, psychologically speaking, is a prompt most of the excellent musical performance of the evening and also points the way to the play's most horrifying and grimly inevitable moment. Welcomed into Auschwitz,

where he has been sent to inspect and report on conditions, he hears the prisoners' band strike up - the reality of their living death - so successfully that he manages to escape the process by which he has unwittingly or half-wittingly played his part - is as nothing to this overwhelming occurrence: it is a real band. He is "cured" at precisely the moment when he is effectively damned.

There are other ironies, all of them grim, all of them familiar. We have heard and seen a good deal about the process by which the appalling becomes thinkable, then acceptable, and gradually inevitable. But there are too many real horrors dealt out by this play for any reviewer to be able to yield to knowledge for long. C. P. Taylor is, anyway, less interested in stirring pity for the sufferers and victims than in provoking reflection on the monsters and torturers. His play sets out to be thoroughly didactic. For the grimest irony is how an intelligent, though innocent, bemused and apparently ineffectual man like Halder can succumb to something approaching gratitude to the gruesome distortion of his works and aims which is effected by the SS to further their own. Such collusion may spring from deeply buried psychological sources, and a few are canvassed: the overriding need for love and acceptance, the talismanic virtue of a uniform and so on. But Taylor implies that the real causes are "ignorance", blindness, self-delusion, a fatal misreading of Hitler's real aims and a failure to grasp the sub-plot of history: the meaning of directions taken by events. Inflation, growing militarism, the deadly words of Hitler, all the sinister stage-management of a circus whose public theatre provides the spectacle of beatings, burnings, lootings and killings - all this was obvious enough; so how is it that Halder can rationalize it as something not to be taken seriously? And how, when the full terror has been unleashed, can he see it as something the Jews have brought on themselves?

It's part of the play's interest, and evasiveness, that though this is

asked, it is not answered in any coherent way. Halder readily believes Anne - the student for whom he has deserted his wife - when she insists "We are good people. Good people". Of course such people as they in fact are seldom believe otherwise. The point is easily scored, but we are to adduce from Taylor's having scored it that he regards the civilized, "humane" intellectual's political innocence as *automatically* self-aggrandizing, hypocritical, contemptible? There is no "good" in any of the characters in his play, though all invoke extenuating circumstances in their favour; the problem, dramatically, is that this moral ambivalence precipitates a circularity, and a profound ambiguity, in the play itself. In such historic circumstances as Halder's, "good" is not a matter of conscience, of scruple and dwelling on the event: it is shown only in action. Acting as Halder does, a man automatically forfeits his claim to be "good". This is clear enough, but it is easy to feel that Taylor has, by the simple expedient of his title, added the semblance of a problematic moral dimension to what is a very different and, given the immensity of the crime, a more superficial argument.

The play moves fast, and its collage of songs and speech, of pathos and crude irony or mockery - not far from the caricature of political cabaret - its rapid alternation between scenes, between Halder's fantasy world and the world of increasing violence, SS men and sexual bliss, are all deftly managed. Alan Howard is - despite some overworking of the face to suggest pained incomprehension or blank bewilderment - brilliant and compelling, particularly in the eloquent scenes of horrified self-awareness; Joe Melia struggles with an impoverished role, but his is a wasted opportunity. More important, surely, than these details of entertainment-value is not just the residual sense of rivalry which surrounds such a project when weighed against the witness of a Paul Cezanne or Charlotte Delbo, or the familiar, appalling newsreels, but the question of whether some things not only cannot be said, but should not be done, at all.

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**Oxford
University Press**

The shaping of the cities

By John A. Davis

CESARE DE SETA and LEONARDO DI MAURO:
Palermo
211pp. L14,000.

GIOVANNI RICCI:
Bologna
191pp. L14,000.

ENNIO POLEGGI and PAOLO CEVINI:
Genova
290pp. L19,000
Bari: Laterza.

Cities have always been an endless source of headaches not only for those who try to live in them or govern them, but also for those who try to write about them. Twenty years ago Lewis Mumford demonstrated the degree of cultural preparation required by anyone venturing to write the history of the city, or even of a city, which may explain why few have dared to follow where he led. And if when it appeared Mumford's incomparable study was thought by many to be unduly pessimistic, looking back on it now, with the summer of 1981 just behind us, that pessimism seems only too well justified.

The great achievement of *The City in History* was to demonstrate that we can only begin to comprehend the city once we begin to understand its past. Only by discovering where the city has been, where it has come from, how and why it has changed, can we begin to say what it is, why it is and what it could be. This new series of Italian monographs, "Le Città nella Storia d'Italia", which will, when completed, cover the history of more than twenty of Italy's historic cities from their origins to the present, is very much in the spirit of Lewis Mumford, although it develops a quite different approach to the subject. It is no accident that its general editor, Cesare De Seta, should be a Neapolitan, for the series is addressed to the contemporary agony of the great Italian cities. But although De Seta and the majority of his fellow authors are architectural historians by training, like Mumford they utterly reject the view that the problems facing the cities today are essentially technical in nature and origin. They see the renaissance of the modern city, the humanizing of megalopolis, as depending ultimately on an act, or acts, of collective political will – the city, for better and worse, has not just happened but been fashioned. To recover it we must therefore have an understanding of what the city has been, of what has been lost and what can and should be restored.

Despite the exceptional importance of the city in Italy's history, this is the first attempt to write the history of cities themselves. Oceans of ink have been devoted to specific aspects of the city or groups of cities in different periods, and there are multi-volume histories now of Milan, Brescia and Naples, with others probably in preparation. Yet these are not histories of the cities as such, but rather of the political and economic systems centred on them. In this sense the title of De Seta's series – "The City in the History of Italy" – is slightly misleading, because it is not the city in the fact that it is a city, but the fact that it is a city that is the subject. The historians have been willing for not more generalizing about the city in history, but more specific information on the history of individual cities.

It is one of the merits of the series, to judge from the three volumes to hand on Palermo, Genoa and Bologna, that the editor and his colleagues have not allowed the massiveness of the task to deter them from adopting an admirably down-to-earth and straightforward approach. Their architectural training leads them naturally to focus first and foremost on the bricks and mortar, the walls, thoroughfares and open spaces that make up the urban fabric. But they do not overlook Rousseau's warning that "houses make towns, only citizens can make a city", which takes us to the heart

of the city as an institution. The crucial problem is to see how and why at different moments an urban society succeeded in moulding and directing the city in a particular form and direction. Here one can detect the influence of the kind of urban history pioneered by such French scholars as Marcel Roncayolo, rather than the Anglo-Saxon variety which has been more heavily on the ready-made tools of the demographer, the sociologist or the economic historian. Essentially, this is an attempt to steer a middle course between the abstract generalizations of "historical urbanism" and the narrow technicality of traditional "histoire urbaine".

The three cities could hardly differ more strikingly, and they reveal clearly both the strengths and the limitations of the method the authors have adopted. The essential data for the reconstruction of the physical development of each city are drawn from maps, town plans and "townscapes". Yet these were rarely if ever – at least before the advent of the modern tax-man – produced purely, or even primarily, for descriptive purposes alone, but are major iconographical sources in their own right. The changing image of the city – and every Italian city has its own identity: *Roma Santa, Venezia Vecchia, Genova Superba, Milano Grande, Bologna Grasso, Ravenna Antica* – reveals much more than a mere development of technical expertise in matters of town planning. The changing "idealization" of the city provides a window on the values and aspirations of those who controlled its destiny at a given moment and moulded its physical development.

Intelligent interpretation of maps and plans advance us quite far in reconstructing the ways in which urban society expressed itself through the fabric of its city. The chaos of medieval Genoa reflected on social reality – that of its factional and warring nobility, shut away from their clans in their fortified *alberghi*. Only when the Doria family rose above the rest, imposing political stability, did a more ordered and structured approach to the city's development become possible, resulting in the famous *Strada Nuova*, which was to make Genoa one of the civic wonders of the western world. But in its cautious refusal to spread far beyond the bounds of its medieval walls, in its striking absence of public squares and meeting-places, Genoa was to bear permanently the imprint of its geographical constraints but of the private enterprise which lay at the heart of the city's success.

Over from Italy

By Raleigh Trevelyan

FILIPPO DONINI:
Da Cesare a Enza
E altre storie di italiani in Inghilterra
133pp. Rome: Trevi, L5,000.

Filippo Donini, who lived in London for eighteen years and was a popular director of the Italian Institute there, is qualified indeed to write about that well-known love-affair between his country and ours. His short book, however, does not attempt to delve in detail into the influence of Italy on British cultural life. His aim, he tells us, is simply to examine the personalities involved. In other words he has provided a kind of light-hearted but useful anthology of Italian famous and not so famous, chiefly – though not exclusively – writers and artists; who over the centuries have visited our shores or even lived here.

Shakespeare described Caesar as an Italian, so Professor Donini believes he has provided a kind of light-hearted but useful anthology of Italian famous and not so famous, chiefly – though not exclusively – writers and artists; who over the centuries have visited our shores or even lived here.

In Bologna, on the other hand, social integration and urban development were sadly out of tune. Bologna's age of glory and premature self-awareness had been in the thirteenth century, thanks almost entirely to the international reputation of its university; but by the time the plans designed to accommodate the city to this new-found fame had been realized, Bologna's reputation had withered and with it the prosperity it had brought. The still recognizable porticoed city was left separated by green fields and open spaces from its new walls, and was to remain almost unchanged in structure down to the nineteenth century – making it one of the most obviously staid cities in Italy in the time of unification.

Palermo followed a different pattern again, dictated more by the sequence of conquests and princely rulers to which it was subject. Inheriting from the Arabs an urban structure and organization centuries in advance of the rest of Europe, its fundamental structure was to remain largely unchanged until modern times and reflected above all the aspirations and pretensions of its rulers – balanced at times by those of the great Sicilian baronage. The result was an elegance and a refinement which proved to be all too vulnerable in a more materialistic age.

The iconographical sources also reveal the qualitative changes that occurred in the nineteenth century, when idealization gives way to geometric precision, and social values and cultural aspirations to the cruder mathematics of the market. But such sources can not do more than point the way. It only becomes possible to trace the precise relationship between society and city when other information is available and other sources have been explored. Ennio Poleggi and Paolo Cevini draw on local and notarial sources to trace the distribution of property in Genoa from the Middle Ages up until the present (confirming among other things the crucial role played by the Church in the process of urbanization in both the medieval and the post-Trentine periods), but otherwise such evidence is notable mainly for its absence and this at times makes certain statements about the social origins of urban developments seem unduly infereous.

All three books are concerned to demonstrate the connection between an active cultural and civic awareness and harmonious urban development. Giovanni Ricci, for example, argues that the reason why Bologna failed

to participate in the Baroque craze for urban renovation was that after the fall of the Bentivoglio and the incorporation of the city into the Papal States, the Bolognese patriarchy lost all sense of civic autonomy and identity. The individual Bolognese continued to build, rebuild and decorate his possessions, but the structure of the city itself, its public buildings, its roads and streets, its open spaces, remained largely untouched. The contemporary significance of the connection is spelt out most clearly by Paolo Cevini when he contrasts the plans of the socialist mayor of Sestri at the start of the century, Carlo Canepa, to create a new industrial metropolis on the Ligurian coast, with the disorganized and suffocating sprawl of the Genoese industrial suburbs in the same years.

The nineteenth century was to be the moment of retribution for all three cities, and each author carefully retraces the ways in which the traditional urban structure and fabric was degraded in the century after Italian unification. It is a depressing story, but one that needs to be told. Older aspirations, methods and materials were cast aside in obedience to the new gods of speed, utility and profit. Even if the appalling aberrations of taste committed by the Risorgimento bourgeois, and in particular their heirs, were not notably worse than elsewhere in Europe, they were all the more damaging for being inflicted on an urban patrimony of incomparable value. In Italy it was not unknown villages that grew into industrial metropolises, but rather the historic towns themselves which were forced into the new mould. Everywhere the railway station now provided the city with a new and often quite unsuitable focus, the rectangular monotony of new residential blocks and aerial highways obliterated the subtler contours of earlier planners, and as the new suburbs rose to satisfy the mania for speculation so the traditional centres began to die of decay and neglect. Hence even those cities, like Naples and Palermo, which were not exactly the most enthusiastic converts to the new age, proved capable of learning its vices more quickly than its benefits. Here free-market speculation proved every bit as damaging as industrial pollution, and as rents and leases leapt up astronomically the conditions of the old disease-ridden quarters grew worse, while new ones appeared that would vie with them for squalor and decay within years rather than decades.

As the story is retold for Bologna, Genoa and then Palermo, it becomes more poignant and more scandalous. But the indictment is at times weakened by the tendency of the authors to simplify the causes of decay, evident for example in their romanticized comparisons between the pre- and post-industrial city. It seems fairly clear that Italian cities were already deeply in crisis well before the onset of any "industrial revolution". From the beginning of the eighteenth century, Palermo, Naples and Genoa were no longer able to accommodate the demands being placed on the urban fabric, particularly because of the relentless rise in population after the respite of the previous century. The vogue for building Alberghi dei Poveri, mad-houses and civil hospitals was a monumental rather than an effective attempt to respond to these pressures. But behind the growing poverty and overcrowding can be seen the failure of those economic systems which had previously supported the cities – be it the international trading empire of Genoa or the monopoly over the agricultural production of its hinterland exercised by Palermo.

One of the things that the history of these cities reveals very clearly is that from the earliest times the city was an institution particularly ill-adapted to sudden or even gradual change. Both overcrowded medieval Genoa and empty medieval Bologna make the same point in different ways – the city was often trapped by its own past, so that the very fabric which provided its historical continuity could easily become its prison. In this sense, the experience of the last century was new in scale but not in form.

Not that this can excuse the damage caused by a century and more of mindless materialism; but nor does it help us to understand the problems facing the city if we simply the process of industrialization or over-estimate its historically demonstrated capacity for change and adaptation. But it is one of the great virtues of these three studies that they do not shy away from the temptation to die of decay and neglect. Hence even those cities, like Naples and Palermo, which were not exactly the most enthusiastic converts to the new age, proved capable of learning its vices more quickly than its benefits. Here free-market speculation proved every bit as damaging as industrial pollution, and as rents and leases leapt up astronomically the conditions of the old disease-ridden quarters grew worse, while new ones appeared that would vie with them for squalor and decay within years rather than decades.

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More myth than movement

By Dan Sperber

SIMON CLARKE:
Foundations of Structuralism
264pp. Brighton: Harvester. £20.
0 85527 978 8

In a recent issue of the *TLS* (July 31, 1981), Ernest Gellner warned the reader against "accepting structuralism as some overall revelation in human and social studies". For one who has lived in Paris through the 1960s and 70s (not the reader whom Gellner had in mind, of course), this is a melancholy anachronism. On the banks of the Seine, structuralism is way past the revelation stage. Gone are the days of resistance, of scandal, of triumph. Dist has settled on the once sacred books. Well-entrenched academics teach structuralism to bored students who beg for something new. The current structuralist vogue in English-speaking countries gives one an uncanny feeling of déjà vu.

I had never come across, though, anything quite like Simon Clarke's *Foundations of Structuralism*. On the whole, Clarke does occasionally follow well-trodden paths (or blind alleys). He takes up, for instance, the image of a structuralist movement, the main figures in which would be Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Foucault, Lacan, Barthes, Derrida, and Tel Quel. "Structuralism" in that sense was invented by the professional promoters of the French intellectual scene as a catchy means of referring collectively to the celebrities of the 1960s. The celebrities concerned all protested that they did not belong to a common movement, and most of them rejected the "structuralist" label altogether; but who cared?

Actually, a loose and less flam-

boyant structuralist movement did develop around Lévi-Strauss, Emile Benveniste, Barthes, A. J. Greimas, J.-P. Vernant, Tzvetan Todorov, Christian Metz, Oswald Ducrot and others. Its history has yet to be written. Its very existence seems to be ignored by many would-be specialists of structuralism. Clarke, for one, does not mention most of the relevant scholars, not even Benveniste, whose influence on French structuralism was second to none.

Clarke's approach is also unbalanced in other, more original ways. His book purports to be "a critique of Lévi-Strauss and the structuralist movement". In the introduction, we learn that critics of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism will suffice since "they apply with equal, or even greater force to the more sophisticated versions that are now current among the avant-garde". Then, it turns out that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is encapsulated in his first book, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*: "[which] establishes the foundation of structuralism. In it the structuralist conception of society, the structural method, and the structuralist human philosophy are developed for the first time." *The Elementary Structures* (in most opinions, a marginal monument rather than the foundation of Lévi-Strauss's later work) gets three times as much space as *Totémisme*, *The Savage Mind*, the two volumes of *Structural Anthropology*, and the four volumes of *Mythologiques* put together. Ultimately, Clarke's discussion concentrates on one chapter of *The Elementary Structures*, devoted to the "principle of reciprocity". There lies structuralism in a nutshell, ready to be further critiqued.

At one point, Clarke sternly objects against structural semiotics that words are "always changeable

and adaptable, their meaning is different for different people". And, his own book indeed offers some good examples of how idiosyncratic word meaning can be. *Foundations*, for instance, in the introduction, Lévi-Strauss is "the founder of structuralism"; a hundred and forty pages later, we learn that "it was from Roman Jakobson that Lévi-Strauss first learned about structuralism". Or *Freudian*, as in "For Lévi-Strauss the individual is Freudian, though purged of all irrationalism by the reduction of the unconscious to a purely formal structuring capacity."

Or again, Clarke accuses Lévi-Strauss, Sartre and others of being *metaphysical*. I assumed that the word was to be understood in the loose, polemical sense introduced by Marx, until I discovered, at the end of the book, that Lévi-Strauss's own particular "metaphysical device" is "biological materialism".

Clarke's redefinition of logical equivalence might startle philosophers of science. There has been, he writes, a proliferation of theories of language in the wake of Chomsky... all of which are logically equivalent in the sense that each tries to produce a mechanism that can reproduce the grammatical sentences of the language and the proponents of each claim that their model is simpler, more intuitive or more "natural" (itself added). In that sense, of course, Clarke's discussion of structuralism is logically equivalent to all the others, since all "try", and all "claim" superiority.

Clarke's full inventiveness comes out in his handling of facts. We learn, for instance, that "Lévi-Strauss's work, and particularly *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, has been the main stimulus to the de-

velopment of structuralism as an intellectual movement". Actually, it is a safe bet that less than ten per cent of all the self-proclaimed (or alleged) structuralists of any note have ever read *Les Structures élémentaires* (which never came near the best-seller list, unlike most of Lévi-Strauss's other books). Again, the anthropologist Louis Dumont is said to have been "trained in the Oxford tradition". In fact, he was already well trained in the French tradition when he went to teach at Oxford.

And then, Chomsky's linguistics "has nothing to tell us about meaning", but this must be a different Chomsky from the one listed in the bibliography as the author of *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar*. The Chomsky discussed in the text has made a "key contribution" to structuralism, whereas the other, better-known Chomsky has violently attacked structuralism and developed generative grammar as an alternative.

Clarke writes: "Chomsky's approach to linguistics and psychology is very like Piaget's approach to cognition and psychology, and Lévi-Strauss regards Piaget as well as Chomsky as a pioneer of the activity to which he too subscribes." Actually, both Piaget and Lévi-Strauss accept as innate only the most general and simple mental structures, whereas Chomsky sees the human mind as comprising several complex and specialized sub-structures. Piaget and Lévi-Strauss do not, therefore, regard themselves as nativists and are radically opposed to Chomsky's views on the matter. This disagreement has been widely publicized.

While Clarke's descriptions are original (to put it mildly), most of his criticisms are rather conventional.

All structuralists are positivists, for example. They are guilty of arbitrariness, circularity, neglect of the context, empty formalism and contempt for the evidence. They construct "ideal objects" rather than study reality. If these were truly the characteristic features of structuralists, Clarke himself would be the most structuralist of them all.

Clarke, however, seems to think of himself as a Marxist (though he pays little attention to previous Marxist discussions of structuralism). With a sudden and massive injection of Marxist and Marxist quotes in the last five pages of his book, he first recalls that the Utopian socialism of the nineteenth century was "aspiring to a society of independent petty commodity producers" and then argues: "The philosophies of Sartre and Lévi-Strauss represent, in a sense, a twentieth-century version of this same Utopianism... However, in the era of monopoly capitalism there is little prospect of a restoration of petty commodity production. Sartre and Lévi-Strauss can only offer, therefore, a contemplative and impotent critique..."

They are "unable either to offer a diagnosis of the evils of the existing society, or to indicate any means of changing it". Lévi-Strauss would, no doubt, agree.

The relevance of Clarke's discussion to a better understanding of structuralism is not immediately apparent, but, as Lévi-Strauss himself has argued, all versions of a myth should be taken into account. Clarke's whimsical version of the myth of structuralism does not really offer a diagnosis of the evils of the existing ideology, nor does it indicate any means of changing it, but it does constitute a glaring symptom.

The verbalization of violence

By Christopher Norris

ERIC GANS:
The Origin of Language
A Formal Theory of Representation
314pp. University of California Press £12.
0 520 04202 6

It is a fair prediction that most of those to whom this book is addressed – linguists, philosophers, anthropologists – will judge it to contain hardly a single meaningful proposition, let alone "a consistent argument that has persuasive power". This description of it, quoted on the jacket, is by Paul de Man, who goes on to speak of a "lively mind" at work on a "somewhat aberrant scheme". Enough to suggest that the "consistency" and "persuasiveness" in question are pretty remote from the traditional virtues and more in line with de Man's own trouble-making theory of "linguistic aberration" and "duplexity".

And so it turns out, with Eric Gans pursuing his arguments very much under the aegis of French post-structuralism and the kind of linguistic speculation opened up by Derrida's grammatology. That Derrida treats of the quest for origins as a chronic and inveterate delusion – a gesture of complexity with Western metaphysics – is for Gans no embarrassment but a welcome, paradoxical spur to reflection. He sets out to develop a full-blown mythology of language and its violent ritual beginnings, a "theory of representation" grounded in a specific ritual scene. Only thus, according to Gans, can thought be provided with a content or sufficiently real basis for the strange divergences of metaphor so relentlessly tracked down by Derrida. Otherwise deconstruction remains a species of "empty" formalism, alert to the problems and para-

doxes of structuralist method but unable to find any referential ground for its own proliferating discourse.

Gans develops the idea of René Girard, that language arose from the act of ritual sacrifice which first gave form to man's inchoate desire, for symbolic mastery and meaning. This drama produced the complex pattern by which discourse evolved from an undifferentiated phase of tribal communion. The sacrificial victim became, as it were, a sublimated focus for all those aggressive and self-preserving instincts which had to find symbolic outlet if the violence was not to be endlessly repeated. Language displaced the sacrificial scene, first into ritualized gestures of enactment, and then into structures which preserved the vital relations and boundaries of group identity.

Gans accepts the main thrust of Girard's hypothesis, but offers what he thinks is a more specific and workable account of the genesis of "representation". He postulates a moment of crisis when each member of the tribe is tempted to seize and appropriate the victim's remains, only to be held in check by the instinctive fear that he may become the next victim. This communal holding-back is a source of reciprocal awareness and a founding stage in the progress from actual to mediated scenes of violence. "The first linguistic act", as Gans puts it, "is constituted by a collective abortive gesture of appropriation." It reveals the possibility that objects may be designated, sacralized, or rendered significant – without danger of violence.

From this point Gans moves on to a full-scale account of the genesis of language, conceived as a series of mimetic displacements, or "specific mediations" leading from an actual murder to the realm of symbolic substitution. Violence, he argues, is intrinsic to the instinct for mimesis, which can only be channelled and controlled by the forms of discursive

representation. The structures of language evolve through stages of defensive adaptation to a primal "mimetic conflict" which cannot be resolved by any other means. Gans's claim – as against Derrida – is that some such hypothesis is needed to arrest the infinite regress of a theory which rejects all notions of "origin" as merely metaphysical. Where Derrida denounces the ubiquitous thematics of origin and presence, Gans on the contrary sees them as a necessary delusion, a deep reserve of cultural myth against the threatening forces of disruption. His theory amounts to a bridge between functionalist anthropology and the powerful but "ungrounded" rhetoric which Derrida brings to his demystification of texts. Gans puts forward his hypothesis as a means of grounding linguistic "presence" and representation while yet admitting the force of Derrida's arguments. It is, he claims, a mode of explanation which "returns anthropological tension to a concept that has simply been taken for granted or, in post-Cartesian thought, internalized as the self-reflection of the subject."

What Gans attempts to show is the twofold process by which language both transcends its origins, developing ever more complex resources, and at the same time conserves its more "primitive" structures as a tacit background to communication. Three major phases – the "ostensive", "imperative" and "declarative" – are defined in broadly functional terms and then shown to evolve through a sequence of transformations which lead from the primitive (context-dependent) to the elaborate discourse of reason. The ostensive form is closest to its ritual origins in the sense of being firmly tied to the here-and-now "presence" of the designated object. As the process develops an articulate structure, building up to the forms of propositional statement, so the ties of word and object are progressively loosened, and language achieves a relative autonomy. From this point of view, Gans argues, the "grammaticality" of a linguistic form can be defined as "its degree of self-containedness or context-freeness, considered as an intentional model of reality."

It is not always clear precisely what status is being claimed for the ritualist hypothesis. At times it is offered as the only "functional" solution to the paradoxes engendered by reflection on language and writing. Elsewhere Gans seems willing to treat it as a generative fiction, a result (as de Man might say) of the

dialectical interplay between thought and the self-proposed objects of thought. Thus Gans preempts the charge that he is arguing in a circle by claiming that his theory necessarily involves no convergence of themes, a telescoped perspective wherein the "origin of language" is inseparable from "the present-day crisis of cultural discourse". On the other hand, it is anxious to dissociate this view from any "weak" hermeneutic or relativist account which would surrender the claim to "functional" validity. As Gans would have it, representation "guarantees its own genesis."

Gans's whole programme is open to various criticisms, including some of those most frequently brought against Derrida. Deconstruction must perforce operate with concepts and strategies of argument borrowed from the tradition it seeks to dismantle, and bearing along with them a baggage of residual metaphysics. Gans is likewise constrained to pursue his own argument through a mode of explanatory discourse which can only gesture – by fiat or hypothesis – or those other, sublimated forms which it strives to resurrect. Far from ignoring this problem, Gans puts it forward as a motif for development and a further "grounding" paradox. The discourse of the human sciences, he writes, "stands an ambiguous relation to both temporalized and de-temporalized discourse, a relation which must be clarified in order to make clear the status we are here proposing for our own theory". In the end it is hard to see how "theory" can break with the kind of self-sustaining critique which Gans himself defines as the "first characteristic of modernity". One can only be struck by the extreme disparity between Gans's (on the face of it) far-fetched ritualist hypothesis and his subtly qualified meditations on dialogue and discourse. All the same his arguments have a speculative range and energy which go a long way toward justifying their eccentric premises.

those forms of "de-temporalized" discourse which stand at the furthest remove from ritual origins. The propositions of logic or mathematics are seen as approaching a zero degree of referential content where the process of mimetic enactment and mediation gives way to a formalized (and finally tautologous) mode of reasoning. As Gans descends him at cathartic structure of discourse has in effect been liberated from its self-reflective cultural subject-matter to construct formally reversible models of any object of potential interest."

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Searching out the secrets

By R. J. Hollingdale

THOMAS MANN:
Thomas Mann
533pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
3 518 03633 5
KATIE HAMBURGER
Thomas Manns hihlisches Werk
270pp. Munich: Nymphenburger.
3 485 08862 7

In the spring of the year 1954, the scholar and critic Hans Mayer was having lunch with Thomas Mann. Herr Mayer had four years previously published, under the title *Thomas Mann: Werk und Entwicklung*, a large volume of critical essays which had been read by its subject with mixed feelings, though also with a considerable degree of admiration. Now the two were meeting in Zürich to discuss the details of a collected edition of Mann's writings which Mayer was preparing and which would, if all went well, appear the following year in celebration of the author's eightieth birthday.

Between the appearance of Mayer's critical compendium and the meeting in Zürich Mann had published what was to prove to be his last completed story: the novella *Die Betrogene* (later beautifully translated into English by Willard Trask as *The Black Swan*) – a work which had had a mixed reception from critics and public, some of whom had not hesitated to say that they felt repelled by it. Certain tendencies in the Master which his admirers, while not denying, preferred not to dwell on – for instance a penchant for a medical exactness not obviously required by the narrative, seemed here to be displayed almost in the manner of a challenge.

Herr Mayer, however, was not among these fainthearts: he had enjoyed *Die Betrogene* and had said so; and the fact that given Mann much pleasure. Now, "he told me", the conversation turned to the criticism the work had received, and Mayer began to expatiate on the qualities and characteristics of the story as he saw them, and upon its meaning. That it constituted a counterpart to the much earlier novella, *Der Tod in Venedig*, was, he asserted, plainly apparent; though what was not so apparent was why the later story should take place precisely in Düsseldorf. As a Rühlpfänger, Mayer was intrigued by this circumstance. That both stories were in some way associated with Goethe and struck him at once, especially in the case of *Die Betrogene* where the relationship between body and soul, the physical and the psychical, was as integral to the story as it was in Goethe's novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Mayer had proceeded thus far when a change in the atmosphere stopped him up to then had been amiable mobility: "I can", he said in an icy tone, "see no connection whatever between my work and Goethe!"

This scene is narrated by Mayer, with all modesty and good-humour, at the end of the recollections of Mann which open this new volume of critical essays. Without intending to believe that he had given Mann too great a role, and since the work could not be other than it was, the author must be other than he seemed to be. There thus came forth a stream of criticism of Mann of which Mayer's *"Der Tod in Düsseldorf"* is the latest tributary: a kind of literary detective work which leads to an unmasking. I do not deny the fascination of this undertaking and I have participated in it myself; but perhaps it has now been carried on for long enough.

Mann has been dead for twenty-six years and has long been considered a great European writer, so perhaps the reading of his works in search of clues as to the character of their author might by now be relegated to the margin or banished from the page altogether. That there is something of Wagner in Alberich might be taken as certain, and some of us imagine we know what it is; but a contemporary critic who occupied himself overmuch with such unridings would not have much to tell us about the *Rheingold*.

These reflections aside, Mayer's *mao Poetic Realism*.

almost only, as a source of future literature: "all love, together with all suffering, was taken in earnest by him above all as his own experience of love and pain. All experience, however, had to be transformed into speech and text: that is the harsh rule of the game. Nothing could remain 'unexpressed'". This contention seems to possess great explanatory power. It would explain why even his shorter works seem, through the weight of their vocabulary, longer than they are; his ambition is always to translate the world of phenomena into a world of words. It would also explain the well-known and perhaps too well-remembered biographical fact of Mann's "ironic reserve" in his dealings with that outer world, and especially with that part of it associated with his profession of writer: he took seriously only (for almost only) his own experience, and then only insofar as it could be put to literary use, and hardly at all the objects that produced it.

Mayer's second proposition is that "there is hardly an author of contemporary literature in whom there seems to exist so great a divergence between the course of his outer life and that of his inner" than Thomas Mann. His bourgeois existence is in conflict with the theme of his works to an extent to which there can be few parallels. No one familiar with Mann's oeuvre can disagree with this judgment, or fail to see in it the origin of all those conflicts and conings-together of antitheses which constitute the heart of so many of his plots.

As an essay in the employment of these principles for the explanation of one of Mann's stories (*"Der Tod in Düsseldorf"*) could hardly be bettered. But it also possesses a further value as an exemplary piece of Mann criticism: it carries to an extreme a tendency – one might almost say a tradition – in the study and evaluation of Mann which I would like to suggest has, precisely in this essay and in this book as a whole, now run its course.

As Nobel prizewinner and preeminent "great writer" whose novels were invariably compared with those of the masters of the nineteenth century; as an internationally known figure whose external appearance was of an almost excessive correctness and called to mind that of a prince minister or the president of a bank rather than that of a writer; and as, during the Nazi era, the quasi-official ambassador to liberal and humane Germany in whose possibility many thousands in the outside world had to continue to believe in the face of so much evidence to the contrary – as all this, Thomas Mann represented an irresistible temptation to the psychological miners and under-miners among the students of literature. The author of *Death in Venice* could hardly be as he seemed. It was as though Gladstone had claimed to be the author of *My Secret Life* or Hemingway had admitted to the authorship of *Peter Pan*. The contrast between author and work was too great; and since the work could not be other than it was, the author must be other than he seemed to be.

There thus came forth a stream of criticism of Mann of which Mayer's *"Der Tod in Düsseldorf"* is the latest tributary: a kind of literary detective work which leads to an unmasking. I do not deny the fascination of this undertaking and I have participated in it myself; but perhaps it has now been carried on for long enough.

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excellent and enjoyable study invites one to return to Mann: not to the by now historical human figure – though Mayer has much of interest to say about him – but rather to *Buddenbrooks*, *The Magic Mountain*, *Joseph, Dr Faustus* and *Felix Krull*, to Aschenbach in Venice and Lotte in Weimar. Yet there is one odd feature about it, for which Mayer's explanation fails to convince me. The book is in four parts: *Erinnerung* (recollections of Mann written in 1980), *Werk und Entwicklung* (a re-publication of the book of 1950), *Für und Wider* (critical essays written between 1965 and 1980), and *Die Tagebücher* (reviews of Mann's Diaries as they appeared from 1977 onwards). Parts one, three and four are straightforward collections of writings originally produced separately; it is the second part, which constitutes a good half of the book, which contains the oddity.

Mayer explains that, in reprinting it from the original edition of 1950, he has made stylistic improvements where he thought they were needed, but has left his early opinions intact, "even where the author is today convinced he was wrong" (my italics). This seems a very peculiar thing to do, and it is not made less peculiar by the circumstances in which the original edition appeared – as Mayer reminds us, in East Berlin "while Stalin was still alive", with all that phrase may be thought to encapsulate as to the possibilities of free expression. Why reprint thirty years later opinions one now regards as misguided? not merely allow them to continue in print, but to restore them to life after oblivion has done what we are offered, which is differing opinions by the same author, the earlier of which he says he now repudiates.

The two long studies – of *Joseph and his Brothers* and *Das Gesetz* – which constitute Katie Hamburger's *Thomas Manns biblisches Werk* are also not new: the *Gesetz* study first appeared in 1963, and the *Joseph* study originated as far back as 1945. Both are quite different in character from the kind of criticism so well represented by Mayer: in essence the book they undertake is to discover how the texts under consideration came into being – how certain familiar passages in the Old Testament were transformed into the novel and the story.

The difficulty of the *Joseph* cycle has always seemed to me the tremendous discrepancy between the number of words required by the author of Genesis to tell the story of Joseph and his brothers and the number required by Thomas Mann. For Mann makes it clear – and nowhere more so than at the very end of his enormous work – that what he offers is supposed to be read as a story (and not as a learned exegesis of the Biblical story); in that case one wonders how it acquired its truly prodigious length. *Thomas Manns biblisches Werk* helps towards a solution of this problem by showing, among other things, the extent to which Mann establishes a relationship between the events of the Biblical story and the events of his own time – a procedure which necessitates expansion. (One example is the connection between Joseph's administration of the economy of Egypt and Roosevelt's New Deal).

German Poetic Realism (150pp, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 0 8057 6447 X) by Clifford Albrecht Berni is one of the "Twayne's World Author Series, A Survey of the World's Literature". The book covers the period from 1848, when Julian Schmidt opened his campaign to promote poetic realism, to 1894 and the publication of the sixteenth edition of Seebert's *Deutscher Dichterwald*. There are chapters on "The Genesis of German Poetic Realism", "The Novella", "The Lyric", "The Novel" and "The Recession of German Poetic Realism".

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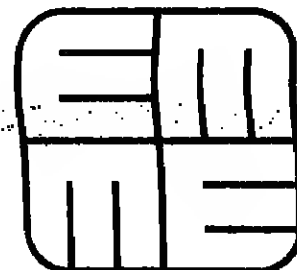
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Consumptive communities

By Masolino d'Amico

GESUALDO BUFALINO:
Diceria dell'antore
196pp. Palermo: Sellerio. L4,500.SALVATORE SATTA:
La veranda
187pp. Milan: Adelphi. L7,000.

Both *Diceria dell'antore* and *La veranda* have youthful narrators who spend time in TB clinics and both survive to tell the story. They fall in love with doomed women who respond with passion but without illusion. There are also striking, if superficial, similarities between the books' authors: both are, or were, islanders - one Sicilian, the other Sardinian - and both latecomers to the literary scene; both, moreover, have been favourably compared to Lampedusa.

Leonardo Sciascia first discovered and endorsed the sixty-year-old Gesualdo Bufalino, a teacher in a provincial school in Sicily. Salvatore Satta, who was born in 1902 and died in 1975, was well known in his lifetime as a jurist. His magnificent novel, *Il giorno del giudizio*, which he wrote in the last four years of his life and which appeared posthumously, was originally published by the same largely academic firm which had handled his legal works, and it was largely ignored by the general public. Adelphi rescued it from oblivion, and launched it as the major discovery of 1979. The recently published *La veranda* was written at a much earlier date; the manuscript had been entered for a literary prize in the early 1930s, but it had failed to impress the jury. At least one member of the jury though, the writer Marino Moretti, considered it to be a sort of Italian *Magic Mountain*, and he bitterly complained of what he felt to be the excessive squeamishness of the Italian public.

at the time. But *La veranda* remained unpublished and was considered lost, until it was recently discovered in a folder of legal documents.

These two authors' personalities, however, are poles apart. Stylistically, Bufalino's book is as rich and as glowing as a *cassata alla siciliana*; from the deep, morbid colour of the blood which gushes endlessly up from the characters' afflicted lungs, it might be described as one uninterrupted purple patch. A consumptive priest says:

The wine for Mass is black, a strong Sslaparuta wine they give me in the kitchen. A dense wine, from the veins of a Saracen god. It works in no time. I realise that in the vestry, when I throw it up, after a coughing fit, into the four corners of my napkin.

And when the narrator muses about his love:

With a sour, horrible stab of lust I thought of her oozing limbs, of her spittings, sweatings, perspiration, tears and exudations... of her triumphant hemoptysis.

With its population of soldiers homo from the war - it is 1946 - the sanatorium of La Rocca seems like a condemned outpost in a hostile land. A lonely, dictatorial chess-playing head surgeon administers to the rituals of death. One by one the inmates fall, mowed down by consumption, or maybe by the sheer, Keatsian voluptuousness of that nocturnal world, where each moment is so loaded with sensations of secrecy and extinction, that life - unselfconscious life - is simply impossible. The surgeon himself is not exempt from the common fate; only the hero somehow emerges from the slow Totentanz, after a futile escape with a doubly desperate girl (a dancer in the final stages of the illness, who has also been cut off from normal people as the former mistress of a Nazi), whose destiny one finds all the more moving for the self-centred description we get of it from the

mecho-inclined protagonist.

Setta's hospital is in the North of Italy and its atmosphere could hardly provide a stronger contrast. Horseplay, practical jokes and locker-room humour take the place of the baroque contemplation of death in Bufalino's clinic on the Conca d'Oro. Here surnames are abolished, and the inmates refer to one another only by the place they come from. They live as stock characters, each one's individual foibles being eagerly seized upon and magnified by the others. Tensing is incessant; as in war, these men seem to find strength in a stream of coarse, uninspired jokes about their predicament. The few "visitors" from the outside world are lugubrious: an unspeakably stuffy prostitute; or three idiot peasants who come in once a week, and who entertain the patients by exposing themselves to their jeers. Most patients come and go, but one, the destitute Melanzana, unable to leave or to die, has become a sort of custodian, or genie of the place.

With hindsight it is easy to liken this angry vision of a microcosm of sick people, who are at once crass, provincial, and bent on mutual bickering rather than on trying to be constructive, and escape their fate, to the sinister Italy of the time, with its petty selfishness and intimations of a common doom. But it must also be said that *La veranda* contains a message of hope in the person of the protagonist, who has little to say for himself, but who emerges as an engagingly matter-of-fact young man, determined to survive, as laconic and practical as his prose. He tends to stand apart, and regrets this at times; but he is capable of observing things and people without acrimony, and above all, of learning his lesson. With the same hindsight, we know of course that he will graduate from the experience of the sanatorium into a normal life as the former mistress of a Nazi, whose destiny one finds all the more moving for the self-centred description we get of it from the

Motorway madness

By Patrick McCarthy

RENE BELLETO:
Le Revenant
415pp. Paris: Hachette

Three years ago René Belletto published a novel called *Livre d'histoire* in which he started numerous stories, interrupted himself and finished none of them. It was a promising book but, as one read it, one wished that Belletto would let himself go and give free rein to his flair for story-telling and to his wild sense of humour. *Livre d'histoire* displayed the extreme self-awareness that characterizes recent French fiction: it was very definitely an example of the not so new novel. *Le Revenant*, however, is an unbridled piece of story-telling written in rich, playful language. It should win Belletto many new readers and it must surely be the outstanding French novel of the year.

It contains three interwoven tales. The first is a detective story full of Latin American drug dealers, casual murders, anonymous machine-guns, miraculous escapes and corpses stuffed into hastily-dug graves on building-sites. Unashamedly melodramatic, Belletto sends us hurtling on a chase from Barcelona to Lyon and on to Sicily, where the denouement includes secret tunnels and underground explosions.

Of the places depicted Lyon is the most vivid. Indeed Belletto has concentrated Lyon for the neglect which centuries of French writers have shown towards it. *Le Revenant* describes the grim working-class suburbs where children play in the wasteland surrounding the skyscraper blocks of flats; instead of the sun Lyon is lit by the eternal flame that arises from this Feyzie chemical works. This is the setting for Belletto's

second tale: the saga of a Spanish family which fled to France in the 1930s. He depicts their dubious French, their complex family ties and their nostalgia for Madrid. Like the detective story, this could have been a book in itself and Belletto has shown that he might, if he wished, write a traditional realist novel.

Instead, he has enveloped the secret tunnels and the Feyzie flame in a greater mystery. *Le Revenant* begins after the death of the narrator's wife, which is never explained, and it ends without telling us what the precious object, for which the gangsters are murdering one another, really is. In Belletto's detective story there are no neat solutions because murder is only one part of a greater evil. Stunned grief at the death of his wife and son drives the narrator to take up crime, which liberates him from the near madness into which he has fallen. The origin of evil lies deep in the family bonds and especially in the parent-child relationship. The heroine Maria goes back to Sicily to confront the memory of her father killing her mother. But Belletto wisely imposes no Freudian schemes on his writing and his third tale is a metaphysical mystery-story in which all the characters are pursued by an ineradicable, inexplicable fear.

This may seem gloomy but the narrator, Marc, tells his tales with comic-verve. Fear takes the form of a plate of sea-food from which an octopus-eye glares accusingly up at him. Every time he stays in a hotel the hot-water system breaks down and he has only to put on a shirt for it to crumple and soil. Most food causes him to vomit - nausea plays an important role in *Le Revenant* - so the children smoke and is happiest driving at seventy miles an hour through the Lyon traffic-jams and on motorways: when Marc speeds down to Sicily it never occurs to him to stop and look at the Italian countryside

and he is impressed only by the frenzied Roman taxi-drivers.

The roil hero of *Le Revenant* may be not Marc but his Peugeot 403. This is how he describes it:

It was an enormous, disgusting, evil-smelling monstrosity which looked as if it had dragged itself here to die... you could tell it had started out as a Peugeot 403 but the ravages of age and dozens of accidents, followed by brutal repairs or by oo repairs of all, had transformed it into a machine on wheels, impossible to classify, unque in a horrible way, with an offensive odour and lots of details depicting American flags, nudes and mountain peaks.

Such passages abound because Marc flees from his fear into comic rhetoric. He loves to play with language: his narrative is sprinkled with deformed Spanish and Italian words and he introduces characters who never speak and others who cannot hear. Belletto has not forgotten the techniques of the New Novel and Marc keeps reminding us that he does not understand the chase in which he is caught up. This leaves him all the freer to invent, and Belletto's imagination never flags. At the end of the book Marc is speeding down yet another motorway and who knows what catastrophes may await him.

Italy: Society in Crisis/Society in Transformation by John Fraser (307pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £10.95, 0 7100 0771 X) is divided into two parts: 'the first part deals with "Crisis, Theory, Structure and Conjunction" and "Modernism, Tradition and Reformism" and the second part with, among other subjects, the Italian Crisis: Change of Ideals, "Social Disintegration", "Tradition", "The Armed Party", "Strategy for Decline: The Economy" and "The Modern State in Italy and its Critics".

MURIEL ST CLARE BYRNE (Ed):
The Lisle Letters
6 volumes, 744pp, 724pp, 651pp, 562pp, 792pp, 480pp.
University of Chicago Press. £125 the set.
0 226 08601 4

In May 1540 Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, Henry VIII's Lord Deputy in Calais, was enjoying a period of leave in London. His family had high hopes. Lisle appeared to be in good standing with his nephew the King. After seven years of grinding responsibility in England's most important military command, there was talk of a less demanding but better paid post at court, perhaps, too, of promotion to an earldom. Suddenly he was called before the Council and consigned to the Tower, where he stayed for two years without trial, apparently forgotten in a flurry of more urgent business. At last Henry gave the order for his release, but Lisle died before leaving the Tower. "Too much rejoicing" at clearing his name was, it was thought, the cause of death.

Lisle's story would normally rate an interesting footnote in Tudor history, and perhaps provide material for a romantic novel. As the acknowledged bastard of Edward IV, he played a minor but honourable role at the court of Henry VIII. His arrest was an incident in the dizzying struggle for power between Thomas Cromwell and his conservative opponents which resulted in Cromwell's own arrest (followed quickly by his execution) coming less than two months after he had been created Earl of Essex. Arrest on suspicion of treason involved the confiscation of papers. Lisle seems to have been a hoarder; or perhaps he was just less quick off the mark than his contemporaries. The Crown therefore netted a mass of papers for the seven years of Lisle's time in Calais which ranged from official correspondence to purely private, family letters.

The Lisle papers have remained with the Crown. In the nineteenth century, with the establishment of the Public Record Office, they were catalogued in that remarkable and indispensable compendium, the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, and their contents became familiar to scholars; although, since the arrangement of *Letters and Papers* was chronological, one carried away little distinct impression of the Lisle material, though little of it seemed very exciting. Of course, they could have Lisle by his agents in London found his way into the standard accounts. Scholars were aware of the private material, though little of it seemed very exciting. Of course, they could have resorted to the PRO where the Lisle Papers formed a separate class, to consult the originals. Except to check up when the *Letters and Papers* summary was too bald, they seem not to have done so in any systematic way.

Some fifty years ago Miss Byrne decided to produce a large-scale edition of the Lisle Papers. The task itself was a daunting one; so was that of getting a publisher to take it on. After many vicissitudes they have triumphantly appeared. A barrage of publicity has followed, much of it directed towards the personality of its now octogenarian author. I cannot remember a serious work of Tudor scholarship featuring so extensively in the colour supplements, or earning a spot on BBC Radio 4.

Was the effort worth it? My first reaction was that it was not, and that the publicity was overdone. Some reporters evidently believed that Miss Byrne had "discovered" the Lisle Letters, and indeed that she had previously "discovered" the letters of Henry VIII, of which she had produced an edition. *Letters and Papers* did after all summarize them, often at considerable length, and scholars could always consult the originals to the PRO; and microfilm could make them as readily available in Los Angeles and Canberra as in Chancery Lane.

Working slowly through Miss Byrne's volumes over several weeks, I have been won over. The job was not merely

worth doing; the result is a major scholarly event. And this in spite of certain irritations caused by Miss Byrne's idiosyncratic methods as editor.

The Letters comprise, on the one hand, drafts of outgoing letters from Calais; and inward, everything from official council letters on affairs of state, to letters from humble estate officials, and duty letters from Lady Lisle's children. Rather surprisingly, given the bulk of the six printed volumes, they are not complete; some 1,677 only of about three thousand originals. (A clearer explanation of the criteria for selection would have been useful). They are supplemented by a large number of other documents, interspersed in the text, or printed in confusingly numbered appendices. They are given in modern spelling and with modern punctuation, though there are also some literal transcripts; each volume also has photographs of selected letters. They are embedded in a running commentary, usually in batches of six or so. The chapters are arranged chronologically, though from time to time the sequence is broken to concentrate on a particular topic, such as the education of Lady Lisle's children. This is defensible, indeed necessary, but since most of the letters deal with more than one topic, the reader is thrown back on a system of cross-referencing and indexing which is often somewhat haphazard. The arrangement of the commentary is also quirky, and the reader sometimes needs a good deal of patience before tracking down the information he needs.

The commentary is sometimes discursive, and in tone rather costly knowing. The physical characteristics of the Angevin kings, Miss Byrne believes, "have survived in generation after generation, and are still recognizable today". We are invited to think of the quarrelsome Jane Basset in terms of a twelfth-century spinster, "still overindulgent with her dogs and still liable to regard the Victor as her dearest enemy". There are a number of factual errors, especially in the description of offices in the biographical notes. There is an occasional howler (John of Leiden besieged in Leiden, instead of Munster) and the odd remark (Henry VII inheriting a "bankrupt kingdom") which reminds us how long the work has been in gestation.

Miss Byrne's own work, indeed, seems to have been completed in 1967. There are references to books published up to 1965. Unfortunately, Miss Byrne was not able to make use of Dr Michael Bush's 1966 paper about the suits over land in which Lisle was involved with Edward Seymour, the future Protector Somerset. I find Dr Bush's account clearer than Miss Byrne's; he also makes some vital comments which she has missed. She was, however, able to make use of Dr Prys Morgan's knowledge of the illuminating Welsh manuscript chronicle compiled by Elis Gruffudd, a soldier of the Calais garrison under Lisle. Extracts from Gruffudd in translation have appeared here and there over the years, trickling tantalizingly into the consciousness of Tudor historians; an edition would be invaluable for those of us not up to tackling a sixteenth-century Welsh source in manuscript form.

Miss Byrne grasps visitors to the Lisle mansion firmly by the arm, insists that they see things in the right order, which is her order, and that they imbibe every possible piece of relevant information, along with a generous ration of *obiter dicta* on the world at large. As a result, they do get to know, fairly well, a few individuals; and develop a passing acquaintance with several dozen more. Intimate knowledge of Tudor Englishmen is not easily come by; the outstanding example is the More family, and in that case it is distorted by hagiographic selection. That knowledge can only come from a long, slow trudge through a mass of materials, much of it (though Miss Byrne would deny it) in itself rather tedious; her brisk, no-nonsense tone helps to jolly one along through the duller patches.

Lord and Lady Lisle were both mid-

die-aged. Miss Byrne argues, not I find convincingly, that Lisle was born early in Edward IV's reign, and that he was therefore in his seventies. (Edward's energies in his later years, she rather quaintly thinks, were monopolized by the Queen and by Jane Shore). Lisle had previously been married to Elizabeth Grey, Baroness Lisle in her own right, abruptly widowed by Henry VIII's execution of his father's minister, Edmund Dudley. Lisle had two daughters by this marriage, he also acquired some stepchildren, one of whom John Dudley, the future Duke of Northumberland, already into his thirties and a well-established figure at court when the correspondence gets under way. Lady Lisle, born Honor Grenville, had been married to Sir John Basset. She had seven children by this marriage, their upbringing providing much of the domestic interest of the Letters, as well as two Basset step-daughters. The Lisles had no children of their own. Hopes that she was pregnant with a Plantagenet heir in 1537 were, cruelly disappointed.

Miss Byrne has acquired a soft spot for Lisle himself, and fiercely defends him from historians who have depicted him as a bumbling incompetent. It may be unfair to blame him for all the misny of them beyond his control. But he was clearly inadequate for a position of great responsibility. Lady Lisle and John Husee, his confidential secretary, joint him, not always very tactfully, in the right direction. Husee is frequently exasperated by his master's incompetence; left to translate a royal promise by word of mouth into the definite grant of a specific estate or an annuity by months of hard graft in the corridors of power. Lisle gets maneuvered by Cromwell into promising the sale of some of his wife's property; back in Calais he dares not tell her what he has done, leaving her in find out when she sets off to see Cromwell on her own account. Lisle also brings trouble on himself by signing documents he does not understand. When Husee does bring negotiations to a successful conclusion, he spells out in painful detail the thank-you letters Lisle should write, and what he should say in the How Henry VIII came to entrust Lisle with such a strategically important command remains a mystery.

Lady Lisle is a much more formidable character. Interfering in her husband's business (official and private) but keeping her own, not surprisingly, under tight personal control. It is Husee, however, who steals the show. He was a by-word at court for his pertinacity; without which Lisle's affairs would have been in an even worse mess than they were. There is no doubt of his real affection for the

Lisles (and of theirs for him), or of his pain when he is unjustly rebuked. He is an excellent raconteur, guarded in his comments on the news, but direct, frequently sardonic, about individuals. "The King's Majesty willed that your lordship should have [some plate]; I trust Mr Cromwell will condescend to the same".

There are a host of memorable moments. John Cheriton, a Devon squire, seeing Pope Clement VII at Pisa with "two the fairest women to his wives that I ever saw out of England", attended by a larger gund than that provided for the Holy Sacrament, gives us an insight into English attitudes to Rome in the year of the Boleyn marriage; all in a splendid Devon accent which comes through the clumsy orthography. Anne of Cleves, delayed at Calais on her way to meet Henry VIII, shows herself already impatient of the formality which English royalty has to endure at meals. Lord Edmund Howard declines a dinner invitation with an excuse (Lady Lisle's remedy against the stone has "made me such a pisser that I dare not this day go abroad") which deserves an anthology place.

Much more important, however, is the light that the Lisle letters throw on the attitudes, assumptions, and values

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of certain Tudor Englishmen and Englishwomen; and this is the real justification for the publication. The study of attitudes, of *mentality*, requires patience, the pondering of evidence, a good deal of reading between the lines; and for that reason it requires the evidence to be readily available in a usable form for appraisal and for re-appraisal, as the Paston Letters have been for a century. Tudor letters, after all, need a good deal of interpretation. Leading figures of the period, the Lisles among them, normally used mnemonics; when the amanuensis was John Husee, he probably supplied not only the form but much of the content of the letter. Nor in fact can Husee's own letters be taken at face value given the danger of commenting on current politics.

On religion, Lisle himself was rather down-to-earth, rather bewildered; distrustful reformers as liable to stir up trouble, but prepared to go along with whatever the King required, seizing the opportunity of acquiring church lands as they became available. (Writingsley's having to displace the corpse of the first Lady Lisle while converting Titchfield Abbey into a house seems not to have troubled him). One could read a certain religious insecurity in Lisle's request to Cromwell "to send home Mr Porter, for there is great lack of him, as knoweth the most blessed Trinity, who send your lordship continuance of health". Lady Lisle was more conventionally pious, even determinedly conservative in her devotions. Even so a priest could be

commended as "very meet" to do her service, because of his talents as gentleman, secretary and musician. The most rewarding individual for analysis could be Husee; on the face of it the clear-sighted man of business, he nonetheless recommends the consolations of Providence to his master and mistress in what seem to be more than conventional formulae, of a rather Protestant tone.

None of the correspondents display the slightest interest in the occult, unless one includes the French doctor who prescribed medicines to be taken at full moon; significant, perhaps, given current theories of the ubiquity of such interests in the sixteenth century. But that may merely reflect the generally unintellectual atmosphere of the Lisles' circle; although the ever-surprising Husee quotes Lotin egger. Writing was plainly a chore; Lady Lisle, asking her husband to add a few lines in his own hand, disclaims any intention of wanting him "to take so much pain to write to me of your own hand in or for all your business". Many correspondents, however, once embarked, seem unable to restrain themselves from the pleasures of description.

Reviewers have seized on the evident affection between Lord and Lady Lisle, "mine own sweetheart", my very heart root and entirely beloved bedfellow", and opposed it to some of the hasty generalizations about Tudor marriage. But the Lisles married, of course, as widow and widower,

Most of the political material is familiar from the *Letters and Papers* version. Nevertheless, following Husee's footsteps as he pursues Lisle's business day-by-day at court underlines the frustration of life without appointments diaries or, in the modern sense, a secretarial system; the interminable "writing" hoping to catch the great man's eye, the endless problems caused by vague or contradictory oral promises by the King needing to be sorted out at a lower level. "For of a truth, the suits of the Court are very prolixious", Husee commented. Gifts, of course, lubricate the system; good French wine, wild boar, and quails from Calais, while on the side the Lisles were always eager for English venison. Husee was often in a tizzy about gifts; the quails were too lean, or Cromwell had his eye on "my lady's sparrow, which I know well her ladyship would in no way part withal". Business was also helped by spies in other people's households; Husee's contacts in Cromwell's house, for instance, got him advance sight of a stiff rebuke being sent to one of Lisle's subordinates in Calais.

There is a temptation to go on citing incidents from the Letters. On a political level, an important contribution is the filling out of the Calais dimension to Professor Elton's analysis of the fall of Cromwell. A good deal could be said about education and the seneschal for suitable preferment for children. The Basset girls spent some time in French noble households, while young James Basset was enrolled, unsuccessfully, in the Collège de Navarre at the age of ten. The Letters do, in fact, contain a good deal which would be worth the attention of French historians.

Miss Byrne is keen to direct the literary scholar as well as the historian to the Letters. In general, she argues, the Letters display "vivid, vigorous and pleasant writing" in contrast to the more stilted style of self-consciously literary works. "The people, in the main, wrote as they talked"; even in dictated letters where, she suggests, punctuation indicates the speaker's pauses and so allows the natural rhythm of speech to be captured. There is certainly a vivid immediacy, a sense of adventure in the use of words, and a delight in rhythm in the Letters which helps carry the reader on. There is also some reported speech which, if it can be trusted, is revealing; for instance, Sir Richard Whetill's account of an

interview with Henry VIII, when he told the King that Lisle had disrespected a royal nomination to a post at Calais:

His Grace said a' was sure, once, twice, or thrice, it was not so. I shewed his Grace it was of truth. His Grace asked me who? I shewed his Grace, one Leonard Snowden, your servant. Then his Grace answered, incontinent, What? so soon? so soon?

Immediacy, on the one hand, on the other the opportunity for an exploration of attitudes, in depth and in context, is what the Lisle Letters offer. Miss Byrne has shown extraordinary patience and perseverance. But she has in a sense been lucky in her timing. When the work was started, social history was largely the province of picturesque "background". The invigoration of the subject in the 1950s and 1960s concentrated on generalizations: in the absence of meaningful statistics, historians paraded examples and counter-examples plucked from a variety of sources, with little regard to context or close reading. But they rescued the subject from dilettantism, and provided a frame of reference which gave meaning to the specific. Miss Byrne has laboured, I suspect, with little attention to academic fashion. She has brought to life, rather in the way of Ladurie on Montillatou or Alan Macfarlane on Ralph Josselin, a significant segment of the past, and shown the harvest which can be won by intensive cultivation.

Forging the machine

By Piers Mackesy

J. A. HOULDRING:
The Training of the British Army
1715-1795

459pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press, £25
0 19 82647 0

"Our military education is by far the worst in Europe, and all our concerns are treated with contempt, or totally neglected." Wolfe's scathing words were written just four years before the spectacular triumphs of British Infantry at Minden and Quebec. It is easier to assess the British army by quoting famous generals — Wolfe, Moore and Wellington, impatient men with high standards — than by laborious research in the files of the Horse Guards. A consensus account of the army between the end of Queen Anne's wars and the battle of Waterloo would depict "vaguely strolling about in dirty red clothes from one gin-shop to another" (Wolfe's words again), officered by lazy, ignorant absents. There would be stupid valour at Fontenoy, a flash of

glory in the Seven Years War, then dismal failure in America and Flanders to be redeemed only by the genius of Wellington.

Then why the glory? At Quebec the usual answer is simply "Wolfe". But at Minden? Surely not Sackville? In the American War it is now generally accepted that the army's performance was usually alert, enterprising and professional; and in the Peninsula Wellington was making brilliant use of a machine already forged. To explain the mystery of the often fine performance of an institution so risibly portrayed, J. A. Houldring has poured through some of the dustiest files in the War Office archives to produce an exciting book. As a Canadian he follows in the footsteps of several compatriots who have been able to accept the old British army on its own terms and to shed light where there had been darkness. His lucid style and mastery of detail have enabled him to write the most important work on the subject for a generation.

Dr Houldring argues that the regiments were trained and led "by an officer corps which was careerist, long-serving, notably experienced, and capable". That does not seem to have been

the general impression among their European allies, and perhaps the author exaggerates; but he produces weighty evidence of widespread study and professional reading, thorough inspection of the regiments in peacetime, and commanding officers who put their energy and experience into making their units efficient. There were other reasons for the unfitness of many regiments when war broke out: reasons imposed by British society and political institutions.

There was, first, the combination of low establishments with rapid turnover of men. In peacetime the average strength of the regiments of foot was only ninety per cent of the authorized establishment, and sixteen per cent of the soldiers were recruits. This meant that only continual training could maintain an efficient instrument for war. But the peacetime routine made this impossible. The regiments were constantly on the move, marching about the country at small intervals. When they were stationary, their quarters were dispersed over a wide area in public houses. If they were quartered in a town, they could be removed and scattered to the surrounding villages to make way for a militia muster, a race-meeting or the assizes. Since there was no police force they were the only body capable of coping with the endemic rioting, and units were moved about, a company here, a troop there, to keep public order. Anti-smuggling patrols in aid of the revenue service dispersed them still more widely. A corporal and a couple of troopers could be out with a riding officer of the revenue service trying to stop the huge armed gangs which escorted the contraband convoys through the southern and eastern counties. In 1766-67 the Scots Greys were scattered in nineteen packets across eighty miles between Hoyant and Rye, the smallest groups consisting of two troopers. Few regiments of foot spent as much as a third of their time together, one-seventh being more typical. Few regiments of cavalry were concentrated for as much as a tenth of the year, and their horses were away at grass for four or five months of the summer to save money.

In these conditions tactical training and even battalion drill were impossible. For most of the time, training consisted of individual instruction of recruits and endless repetition of mechanical basic training; especially the manual firelock exercise, contemptuously referred to as "one-two". What saved the army were the annual inspections. Every year for two or three weeks the regiment was concentrated to prepare for inspection by a general officer who, had been appointed for the season by the Horse

Guards. His report was detailed and if necessary critical. In one regiment "the men are slouching and ill set up; they are not steady and do not know how to handle their arms". A better regiment "would be fit for service, if the officers took as much pains as the men". The Hanoverian kings also took a personal interest. They read the inspection returns, and often rode out from London to conduct a surprise inspection. Only in the period before the annual inspection could a battalion count on its ten companies drilling together, to equalize their marching pace, practice the battalion firing system, and try out some of the numerous tactical evolutions laid down in regulations.

Still, however, there was little provision for training of higher formations and senior commanders. In London the foot guards were permanently together, and held annual camps in Hyde Park where brigade evolutions were performed. In Ireland the regiments of the Dublin garrison were rotated annually, so that each in turn could take part in brigade exercises in Phoenix Park, where the latest regulations could be tested. But in England in peacetime few regiments or generals had a chance of brigade training. For the sake of economy, and for lack of suitable camps and training areas, there were no regular peacetime camps such as the Continental armies held.

This meant that when war broke out most of the army was not in the phrase of the inspection reports "fit for service". If thrown into field operations at an early stage they would perform shakily, as they did at Dettingen, the Monongahela and in the Flanders campaigns of the 1790s. "The fire of our Foot was infamous, puff, puff", reported an officer who saw the untrained regiments break at Prestonpans. But it was only in war that training for war could begin. At home there were regular summer camps to meet invasion; and here at least combined training began. Manoeuvres replaced the monotonous manual exercise — "the feet and not the arms will be exercised" — and Houldring reveals a surprising and imaginative variety of exercises and mock battles: advance to contact, attack and defence of woods, fortified houses and entrenchments; flanking movements, street fighting, river crossings, night marches and ambushes.

It was still a minority of regiments that had camp experience. The majority went to war without it, and completed their training in the field. "One-two" was dropped, and the complexity of the drill books was ironed out to what could be practised on the battlefield. In the Seven Years War, for example, the immensely elaborate checker system

of platoon fire was replaced unofficially by the rolling alternate fire, the companies volleying in turn inwards from the battalion's flanks.

Three years of wartime training explain the successes of the *armus mirabilis*, 1759. The six battalions which shattered the French cavalry at Minden had had camp training before they embarked for Germany; and on arriving in the theatre they were kept out of action for a year while they trained intensively under the unduly indulgent Lord George Sackville. Firing with ball, practising the alternate firing, and field-days, were the secrets of the Minden victory, as they were of Wolfe's crushing volley on the Heights of Abraham.

Houldring analyses the succession of official *Regulations* which, from the middle of the century, pushed the army's tactics into greater flexibility and kept them in line with Continental developments. He sees the 1760s and 70s as the turning-point towards increasing sophistication of manoeuvre. These official publications were backed by numerous private publications which sold well and were widely studied. It was in the 1790s that the foundations of the Paninist army were laid, when Colonel David Dundas's *Principles of Military Movements* (1788) were adopted in the 1792 *Regulations*. This was not done without extensive testing in the Dublin garrison, where Dundas was the Irish staff. From Ireland trained regiments disseminated the new drill in overseas garrisons, while in England a special camp on Bagshot Heath displayed the new manoeuvres to George III. The appointment of the Duke of York as Commander-in-Chief in 1795, with Dundas as his Adjutant-General, ensured that the uniform training of the army was maintained. It had all been more systematic than is commonly supposed.

The Duke of York's role in preparing the army for its penultimate victories has been pointed out by other historians, notably Richard Glover, a fellow Canadian, in his book *Peninsular Preparation*. But Houldring suggests that in making his point Professor Glover exaggerated the defects of the old army. In doing so he followed a long tradition. Politicians and generals who served through the Napoleonic War acquired a vested interest in overpainting the faults their generation had corrected. Castlereagh is often quoted: "A British Army... had no more uniformity of movements, or discipline, or appearance in its various regiments than one composed of the troops of different sovereign states." Dr Houldring offers us a different picture of the eighteenth-century army.

On the Parnassian slopes

By Roderick Beaton

ODYSSEUS ELYTIS:

The Axion Esti
Translated and annotated by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis
103pp. Anvil Press. £5.95.
0 85616 065 6

TAKIS SINPOULOS:

Selected Poems
Translated by John Stithatos
94pp. Oxus Press, 16 Hslemere Road,
London, NE. £3.50.
0 905501 11 X

GERARD CASEY:

Between the Symplegades
Re-Visions from "A Mythical Story"
by George Seferis
37pp. Enitharmon Press. £3.75.
(paperback, £2.40).
0 905289 86 2

A consequence of Greece's recent accession to the EEC predicted in a light-hearted mood by an academic colleague was the likely establishment of a Greek "poetry mountain". With a population of less than a fifth of that of Great Britain, Greece nonetheless produces annually a greater volume of published poetry. Who reads it all is another matter; but it is not only in quantity of published work that Greek poets excel. Since the time of Constantine Cavafy in the early part of this century, several of them have established international reputations, while others have produced work of exceptional quality which remains little known abroad.

Odysseus Elytis was surprisingly little read in this country until the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1979 brought him into the international limelight. This is not wholly the fault of translators — he is well represented in the early translations of Greek poetry by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, translations of his poetry have been appearing in magazines such as *Agenda* for many years, and Kimon Friar's book-length selection, *The Sovereign Sun*, was published in America in 1974. The truth seems to be that poetry which is lyrical, optimistic and of language does not so easily find favour with British readers as it does say, in France, where Elytis is much better

known. Be that as it may, it is a sad reflection on British publishers and readers that the translation by Keeley and George Savidis of Elytis's greatest work, *The Axion Esti*, has only recently been brought out in this country, six years after it appeared in a limited edition in the United States.

Edmund Keeley is a veteran translator of Greek poetry, having collaborated with Philip Sherrard on the now classic *Collected Poems of Seferis*, and more recently on translations of Cavafy and Sikelianos, while Savidis is one of Greece's foremost editors and textual scholars. The result is a translation of a high degree of accuracy, with a useful explanatory preface and an excellent and wisely selective set of notes, many of them based on the poet's own unpublished commentary, and a valuable adjunct to the original Greek text, which is unannotated. The faithful translation aims above all to be faithful to the Greek, and it is a pity publishers have not been able to retain the parallel-text format for which the translation was originally intended, and to which reference is still made in the preface.

As the translators themselves concede in this preface, no English equivalent can do complete justice to the linguistic exuberance and allusiveness of Elytis's text, and it must be admitted that they have not always risen fully to its challenge. In particular the decision, explained in the preface, to avoid echoes of the King James Bible is arguably a mistaken one, in that the enrichment of the contemporary poetic language by judicious allusion to the language of earlier periods is one of the major achievements of the poem. The language of the translation is too consistently contemporary, and in the prose passages the introduction of modern slang to reproduce the "early nineteenth-century demotic" of the original obscures the deliberate datedness of that idiom. One of Elytis's elements between the styles of General Makriyannis and of the Greek New Testament. Similarly, the inclusion of one each of the best known Anglo-Saxon four-letter words may have seemed to the translators obligatory for publication in America in the mid-1970s, but jars a little today. Elytis

is a poet who calls a great many things by their names without prurience, but without vulgarity either.

These are small criticisms, however, when set beside the very considerable achievement of the translators in giving us a fresh and always readable version of a poetic work of such magnitude and complexity.

No less to be welcomed is a new volume, translated by John Stithatos, of *Selected Poems* by Takis Sinopoulos. Sinopoulos, who died earlier this year at the age of sixty-four, was until recently almost completely unknown in this country. Translations by Stithatos first appeared here in 1975, and with the small collection *Sonnet* from the same translator (Oxus, 1980), the American publication of *Landscapes of Death* (translated by Kimon Friar), and this new volume, Sinopoulos has in a short space of time become one of the best represented Greek poets of his generation in English translation.

The world of Sinopoulos's poetry is a bleak one: it is rather as if Wilfred Owen had written about the trenches. Scarred by his experiences during the Second World War and the ensuing civil war, Sinopoulos spent a lifetime trying to exorcise ghosts, and it is both a limitation of his poetry and a source of its obsessive strength that he failed to do so. Stithatos's translations are terse, urgent and vividly recreate a sense of nightmare, of alternate efforts to escape and to come to terms with the constant presence of violent death.

In his last poem, "The Grey Light", included here in full, Sinopoulos, according to the translator, "confirms that he is a poet not of death but of the true hope which can only be found at the end of a journey through the heart of darkness". That hope had flickered throughout Sinopoulos's poetic career — in the figure of Helen, in the surrealist encounter with "Max", in the tortured relationship of the middle-aged couple Ioanna and Konstantinos, in the poem "which might lead that prison, wall of eternity in one fell swoop" of *Sonnet*. But his last poem of Sinopoulos retains the ambiguity of his earlier promises — the serenity which the poet finds may be closely linked

with awareness of his own approaching death:

Kimon kept saying in the previous dream there is much darkness in your mouth. Only in dreams, said Kimon, does the river's deathlight suddenly glimmer in this way.

There must be some doubt as to whether *Between the Symplegades* by Gerard Casey really belongs in a review of translations. The poems in this volume are reworkings — somewhat portentously subtitled "Re-Visions" — of poems by George Seferis, and the aim of the author/translator "has been to present a free interpretation of the poems as they struck one in particular these circumstances to complain of inaccuracies in translation, since the poems are not offered as translations; but their dependence on Seferis's originals is close enough to prevent them from being called original poems. As a result one is left rather uneasily comparing Seferis's poems with Casey's "Re-Visions" of them and wondering if even this is quite fair.

Certainly there is every sign of thoughtful engagement with Seferis's originals, and a carefully worked attempt to recreate his "visions" in a more streamlined, smoother style. Inevitably certain things are lost: Seferis was such a careful, conscious artist himself that any rearrangement involves a change in emphasis, if not of meaning; the loss of one ambiguity and quite often the creation of another. There are deliberate omissions in these reworkings, but more disturbing is the banality of some of the lines and ideas which Casey has added, such as the final line of a poem, "throw this bottle into the sea", which seems a clumsy attempt to justify Seferis's subtitle, "Bottle in the Sea", and the addition, "It is expected of us/according to the rules" to Seferis's resounding "Will we be able to die properly?"

The general streamlining of Seferis's style does not after all make this dense and intentionally "difficult" poetry any easier to understand, although the absence of punctuation and a deceptively simple style make for a text which reads fluently and naturally. I can see no poetic or typographical justification, however, for neglect of the apostrophe.

Speaking for the Ukraine

By Arnold McMillin

GEORGE S. N. LUCKYJ (Editor):

Shevchenko and the Critics 1861-1980
322pp. University of Toronto Press.
\$30 (paperback, \$8.50).
0 8020 2346 0

Even in the peculiar historical and political circumstances of Eastern Europe it is unusual for a writer to embody so fully the national spirit and aspirations of his people as Shevchenko has done for all Ukrainians since 1840. When his first volume of poetry, *Kobzar* (The Minstrel), was published, as Bohdan Rubchak suggests in his introduction to *Shevchenko and the Critics*, the metamorphoses in Shevchenko's image reflect the progress of modern Ukrainian consciousness itself, but, as with so many other aspects of Ukrainian culture, an element of fierce controversy is never far from the surface. Like several other non-Russian poets of the former Russian Empire (Byelorussian's Janina Kupala offers an obvious parallel), Shevchenko may be regarded either as a defender of the oppressed across national borders or else as a champion of Ukrainian interests regardless of social strata, and this dichotomy which arises directly from his writing itself, is one over which

Soviet and Western commentators have disputed with particular intensity since the 1930s, each side accusing the other of falsifying the poet's image.

But if the Soviet tendency to distort and simplify derived some of its momentum from Stalin's tyranny (many Russian poets, too, were repressed and bowdlerized at the time), the practice of publishing ostensibly complete editions of Shevchenko's work while omitting uncongenial anti-Russian poems continues to the present day as indeed it does with Kupala and many other non-Russian poets. The Western response to such falsification has on occasion itself been over-politicized, but the challenge of restoring a more complete picture of Shevchenko has generally been met in a responsible and effective manner, by the publication of suppressed works and the dissemination of full bibliographical information, as well as by serious academic criticism and analysis. An important example of the latter was *Taras Shevchenko 1814-1861*, a Symposium (The Hague, 1962) from which a number of the pieces in the present anthology are drawn, and *Shevchenko and the Critics* performs a similarly valuable service by bringing together a wide selection of critical commentaries, ranging from the grave-sided oration of Panteleimon Kulish in 1861 to analytical articles by young North American scholars made specifically for the volume.

Thematically, this anthology is as

broad as its range of authors, covering Shevchenko's life and work from many angles. Bohdan Rubchak's excellent introduction analyses the poet's lasting significance, reviews (with admirably full bibliographical detail) the critical canon, and indicates some of the lacunae remaining to be filled. Thereafter the arrangement is chronological: Kulish, Mykhailo Drahomovych and Volodymyr Antonovych are followed by Ivan Franko, Ukraine's second greatest poet, whose foreword to Shevchenko's *Pererobka* (1888) is a classical piece of criticism. Also from the last decades of tsarism are Boyts Hontchenko on the poet's national ideals, Mykola Levshin, and, particularly interesting, the Russian writer and scholar Korocay Chukovsky on the poet's "abandonment" — it is a pity that space could not have been found for another very worthwhile Russian piece, Viktor Shklovsky's formalist analysis of Shevchenko's prose. Andrii Rylsky on Shevchenko's "muzhik" philosophy (1923), Pavlo Plypovych (1924) and Lisa Schneider (1978) on his romanticism, and Dmytro Chyzhevsky on his religion (1936) are amongst the most interesting treatments of general topics. Narrower, but also deserving of separate mention, are George Luckyj's study of the archetype of the bard in Shevchenko's poetry, Bohdan Rubchak's analysis of the ironic roles of the self in *Kobzar*, George Shevchenko's brilliant review of the year 1860 in Shevchenko's work, and the exiled mathematician Leonid

Pluhach's illuminating philosophical discussion of *Prachyma* (The Bewitched Woman). The collection ends with a thought-provoking consideration of the deep structures in Shevchenko's works by George Oranowicz, an encouraging example of contemporary academic Shevchenko scholarship, avoiding set positions and automatic acceptance of Western received wisdom.

The "struggle for Shevchenko" (the title of an early Soviet book) is, however, an active one, and worth pursuing by scholarly means, since many artificially created myths are still maintained in present-day Ukraine; a good example is that of the Russian critic Belinsky's supposedly positive attitude towards the Ukrainian, successfully exploded by Victor Swoboda in the present volume.

The selection of the twenty-seven articles is admirable, and none of the contributions superfluous. The temptation, provoked by all anthologies, to suggest additional items is only strong in the case of Oleksander Biletsky, whose 1939 article on Shevchenko and world literature would have added an important new thematic dimension to the volume. Well edited, and with a glossary of historical terms and index, mainly of names and titles, *Shevchenko and the Critics* is a valuable reference work which should greatly further knowledge and understanding of one of the most powerful as well as most ill-used poets of the Slav world.

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In a world gone wrong

By Philip Payne

DAVID S. LUFT:
Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture 1880-1942
323pp. University of California Press, £14.
H520 03K52 5

Alice and Nietzsche, brought together in Robert Musil's imagination, became "Clarisse", one of the main characters in *The Man without Qualities*. Musil watched Alice Donath, the wife of a close friend, over many months as she inched into insanity; as a young man Musil had felt Nietzsche's ideas pull strongly at his own mind and emotions. These two powerful experiences came together in the work on which his reputation as the leading Austrian novelist, and one of the most important figures in German literature of this century, is founded. Much of Musil's creative work rested on intellectual and emotional experiences which he could vouch for as authentic; he had lived through them himself, or had observed them closely in his wife or his friends, or had taken their measure in an intense imaginative reconstruction of the inner world of contemporaries who caught his attention. He worked in this way in order to create an image of his times which was as unblurred by invention as possible. He disliked authors who paid less heed than he did to the matching of facts to words, and of both to the internal logic of a narrative. (He compared Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* to a shark's stomach in which the reader found the intellectual concerns of the day lying quite unassimilated inside the fiction.) Given the interrelations between Musil's life and his creative work it is surprising that David Luft's *Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture, 1880-1942* is the first biography of Musil to appear since Wilfried Bergahn's much shorter monograph published by Rowohlt in 1963.

Luft explores Musil's origins in the Austro-Hungarian "borderlands" of liberalism, Enlightenment rationalism and German classical humanism — they had allied themselves with the backward-looking aristocratic establishment of a declining empire in an attempt to restrain the mass movements of Christian Socialism and Social Democracy. Musil felt the unease of a society on the verge of destruction, recognized that the social crisis was part of a deeper crisis and, like many others of his generation, wanted to play his part in the revival of culture itself. The problem was to decide how best to contribute. He tried various careers: soldier, engineer, academic philosopher or psychologist, librarian and, just before the outbreak of World War I, editor of Samuel Fischer's journal, *Die Neue Rundschau*. He achieved success in each field — he was even offered a post under the

distinguished philosopher Alexius Meinong, after completing his doctorate on Ernst Mach under the psychologist Carl Stumpf in Berlin — but he felt constantly frustrated by the sense that each career failed to satisfy his central concern. Only creative writing offered the freedom to devote himself to what he called "die geistige Bewältigung der Welt" ("mastering the world by intellectual means").

Central to this programme was, as Luft shows quite brilliantly, a review of sexuality. Musil's exploration of this field was more immediate than that of his compatriot, Freud. After an initiation in sexual perversion at the military academy he attended as a boy, which he recorded in his first novel, *Young People* — Musil must feel minor changes in the names of those involved — he continued, and was cured of, syphilis while still a student of engineering at Brünn; it was only later that he broke free of the grip of his headstrong, hysterical mother, who was horrified when he took as mistress Herma Dietz, a Czech working-girl. Herma's death in Berlin was later narrated, partly verbatim from Musil's diary, in the short story, "Tonka". Musil's Berlin landlady, shocked by a literary sketch she happened to come across, decided Musil was a sex maniac — a more discriminating modern reader might have recognized in it evidence of Musil's acuity of his subconscious, glimpsed in half-remembered dreams, on which he was to base Christian Moosbrugger, the man who murders prostitutes in *The Man without Qualities*. For this character, exceptionally, there seems to have been no living counterpart; Musil drew on his own emotions and his reading of psychiatric texts. The richest experience came, again in Berlin, some years after Herma's death. Musil met Martha Marcovall, a painter, who had been married twice and was several years older than he. Their relationship was marked by a complete frankness; Martha's confession that she had been unfaithful to Musil with a former lover provided the material for "The Temptation of Silent Veronika". In this story Musil developed a language of analogies to evoke transitory states of mind; this helped him to convey his perception of the way in which each individual establishes a network of ideas and feelings about himself or herself which, looking into a specific "Gestalt", becomes the guiding life principle. The act of infidelity, worked into the "Gestalt", became part of the bond between Musil and Martha. Their experiences provided the basis for the relationship of Ulrich and his sister, Agathe, in *The Man without Qualities*.

Luft traces Musil's progression from passion to love and from love to mystical experience. After three years of marriage, war separated Musil from Martha. Their suffering merged into the suffering of their generation. But when the war was over most people forgot the feelings that had earlier overwhelmed them. This was one aspect of a general

flight from the metaphysical; because the old theories were discredited most men drew the false conclusion that all metaphysics was humbug. Musil wrote: "We have seen much and understood nothing [because] we did not have the concepts with which to take in what we experienced." Musil himself tried to hold on to the experience: first in the story "The Lady from Portugal" where Martha and he took on semi-mythical medieval roles against the background of the North Italian countryside where he had spent much of the war, and later in his major work, where he analysed the causes of Europe's descent into war and tried to isolate elements of an awareness from which European culture might be reborn.

Musil's masks of irony and intellectual non-involvement do not deceive Luft; he sees through them to the message: the conflicts of contemporary ideologies all take place within the orbit of a world gone wrong; human awareness must be jolted out of its cultural rut before significant change can take place; to progress, men must turn away from their obsession with objectivity, close the gap between thinking and feeling, and rediscover the (Musil) "fire of

Crumbling worlds

By Stuart Parkes

URS JAEGLI:

Grundriss
275pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.
3 472 86532 6

KARL OTTO MÜHL:

Trumpener Irrtum
202pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.
3 472 86528 8

ALMA JOHANNA KOENIG:

Der jugendliche Gott
299pp. Hamburg: Styria.
3 222 11299 1

The first two of these novels both deal with a crisis in the life of an individual. Urs Jaegli is a professor of sociology at the Free University of Berlin, who has become as well known for his literary as for his academic writings. Like his creator, the narrator, Albert, is a Swiss living in West Berlin, albeit with the different profession of architect. The crisis he faces has three aspects: a professional one, one resulting from his relationship with his wife and another concerning his adolescent daughter. Professionally, he is dissatisfied with his work, which, despite his progressive aspirations, he sees as contributing to the destruction of the environment of the city. Because of this, he abandons his job, makes friends with Robert, a former alcoholic and refugee from the East, and plans with him an alternative theatre. Although the project comes to fruition, Robert, who has been diagnosed as having a brain tumour, commits suicide and Albert returns tentatively to his architectural work.

Albert's wife, Ursula, is a lawyer who, despite her underprivileged and, occasionally, suspected terrorist status, she too, like her husband, has left-wing opinions. This does not prevent strains in the marriage, underlined by Albert's relationship with another woman and his decision to move into a flat in an inner-city area. His difficulties with his wife, however, seem slight when compared to those he has with his precocious thirteen-year-old daughter, Ruth, who regards teachers as the class enemy and school as an embodiment of fascism. Although there is a bond of affection between the two, all his advice seems to fall on deaf ears.

It would be easy to indulge in wholesale condemnations of Jaegli's novel. Many will lack sympathy with a central character who seems to have brought most of his problems on himself. Equally, it can be pointed out that the work lacks plot and structure, consisting largely of a series of brief descriptions and inter-

nal monologues. In the latter part of the novel, for instance, the theme of Albert's relationship with his wife is almost abandoned as his concern for his daughter comes to dominate the narrative.

Such a critical view would be one-sided: *Grundriss* has both interest and merit. It successfully evokes the atmosphere of West Berlin as a city beset with social problems and characterized by numerous alternative political groups. Jaegli is able to inspire sympathy for his characters, particularly in his presentation of the father-daughter relationship where the unstructured narrative form does make the characters' predicament appear authentic. Moreover, the final impression left by the novel is not one of despair. Even if at the end Albert's fate is somewhat incredibly destroyed because of a mistake by demolition workers, he has gained from his experiences and seems, professionally at least, to be more likely to be able to achieve something positive.

Despite the similar theme, Mühl's *Trumpener Irrtum* is a very different kind of work. The author looks at his characters from a sovereign distance and unfolds their story with ordered precision. Trumpener works in data-processing. He is reasonably successful, self-assured and apparently humane. In the course of the novel, however, his world crumbles. When his firm is taken over it is decided that it no longer needs a separate data-processing unit and he is forced out of his job without actually being sacked. On the personal level, his wife leaves him because of his patronizing manner. Although he has two other relationships, these never develop satisfactorily because of his lack of emotional warmth.

The events of the novel immediately raise the question of the author's attitude to his characters. It is, especially in the case of

Frischschritt

SIEGFRIED UNSELD (Editor):

Begegnungen
Eine Festschrift für Max Frisch
226pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM32.
3 518 02842 1

The latest example of that most successful of German exports, the Festschrift, celebrates the seventieth birthday of the Swiss writer Max Frisch with brief tributes from most of the stars of the German literary firmament: writers such as Siegfried Lenz, Martin Walser and Christ-

Wolf, and critics like Hans Mayer and Adolf Muschg. There are few substantial offerings — a notable exception is Uwe Olsson's "Skizze eines Verunglückten" — but the collection usefully charts the extent and character of the influence Frisch has exerted upon his own and subsequent generations. His novels and especially his diaries seem to have mattered more than the plays — perhaps because the talents of this introspective, esoteric writer are well dramatic. Muschg exposes very well the persistent hostility of the Swiss establishment to Frisch, but how much worse if it had embraced him!

Like any critic of the period, she faces at the outset the problem of definition. Are the terms "Romantic", "classical", and "Enlightenment" useful or even usable? Need the critic cast glances at the culture of countries other than England, and if he does, what significance can be drawn from the similarities and contrasts he perceives? Is it helpful to draw on arts other than literature? To all these questions Marilyn Butler would answer emphatically, yes. It follows that her book is ambitious, difficult, and in places contentious. In tackling the problem of definition she resorts understandably to the visual arts, finding in recent art criticism a redefinition of Neoclassicism and Romanticism which fits her own sense of the need to change our perspective on what we too frustratingly take to characterize the "Romantic" in literature.

A group of recent art critics, including Hugh Honour, Robert Rosenblum and Lorenz Blier, have defined with a new clarity the artistic movement they call Neoclassicism, which began in the middle of the eighteenth century and thus preceded the American and French revolutions. Though this style went through modifications, its assumptions largely set aesthetic standards for both France and England, the two leading protagonists in the French revolutionary wars, until the struggle finally ended in 1815. If the interpreters of this movement are correct, it is Neoclassicism that initiates the rejection of previous values, the intellectual and artistic aggression, that for one and a half centuries has been attributed to Romanticism. Either, indeed, describes the eighteenth century as a period of "sharp action and innovation", the first half of the nineteenth century merely as one of "response and reflection".

The attraction of this alternative proposition, which permits a redefined Neoclassicism to go on co-existing with Romanticism, is that it allows for a dialogue within the arts, for conflict and even contradiction. Almost every attempt to represent an artistic new wave, one Romanticism, is hopelessly subverted by the richness of art in the period.

No one would argue with this sensible statement, yet some distortions inevitably occur when Marilyn Butler adopts the term "new classicists" for the younger generation of English Romanticists, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Hazlitt and Peacock, since the characteristics usually defined as neoclassical

Schools within schools

by Rosemary Ashton

MARILYN BUTLER:
Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries
English Literature and its Background
1760-1830
213pp. Oxford University Press.
£7.95.
019 219144 6

In this short, densely-written book Marilyn Butler explores anew the phenomenon known as Romanticism. Her work is intended to give a new interpretation, one which stresses the heterogeneity of the literary forms and attitudes of the age by giving the "critical-historian's" reply to the received view of Romanticism (most influentially promulgated by M. H. Abrams and René Wellek) as distinguishable from classicism by its exaltation of perception, imagination, organic form, and symbolism. She rightly insists that

"Romanticism" is inchoate because it is not a single intellectual movement but a complex of responses to certain conditions which Western society has experienced and continues to experience since the middle of the eighteenth century. There seems small chance of understanding how social pressures worked upon the artistic process except by making careful discriminations between the atmosphere of different cultures, notably England, France and Germany, and different times (England in 1789, for example, differentiated from England in 1798 or in 1817).

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by art historians — simplicity, universality, representativeness — cannot comfortably be transferred to apply to these writers. No doubt there are arguments enough among experts about the application of such definition to painting; how many more must there be among students of an art less predominantly formal, like literature? This is not to deny that comparisons between art and literature can be valuable for the appreciation of both, but rather to suggest that any wholesale transference of definitions is doomed to failure.

In practice, in fact, Marilyn Butler is too discriminating to attempt such a transference. When writing later in the book about the works of the younger Romantics, she perceives their "neoclassicism" not in the terms just suggested, but rather as a matter of religious freethinking and political radicalism in opposition to the Christian and conservative stance of the older Romantics, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. Thus the terminology is established by reference to a standard which is subsequently dropped, yet the term "neoclassical" (and here related but undefined term "Enlightenment") persists throughout the book, as though it were a constant and reliable point of reference.

Marilyn Butler again impresses and provokes when she takes account of other literatures. It is understandable that in the early chapters, in which she is seeking to define her terms and sketch the boundaries of her study, she should turn primarily to the German Romantics. Yet, after all, were the most self-conscious and theoretical of European Romantic authors, Friedrich Schlegel actually used the term Romantic, as opposed to classical, to define his own and some of his contemporaries' literary endeavours. But despite this seeming homogeneity of attitude and philosophy among the Germans, they can no more be treated conveniently as a school speaking with one voice than can the so-called "Lake School" in England. To specify only a few difficulties: what part of Schiller's or Goethe's work can be called "Romantic"? What does Keats or Byron have in common with Wordsworth? What do we make of the fact that Shakespeare was viewed by some German critics of the period as a classical and by others as a Romantic author? Or that, according to Schlegel, the novel is the Romantic form *par excellence* (a proposition hardly helpful for English literature of the time)? or that the German Romantics differed radically in their response to Kant, as well as in their political and religious persuasions?

There is, of course, some truth in Marilyn Butler's statements that "for the first two decades of the nineteenth century, German Romanticism remained Catholic and counter-revolutionary", and that Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* "commends the German example, which is religious", but such generalizations do not bear close scrutiny. After all, Coleridge can be seen in *Biographia Literaria* retreating from what he saw as the negative consequences for religion of the philosophies of Kant and Schelling, which he found intellectually so stimulating. It is surely taking an odd perspective on Coleridge's activities to say "Coleridge took up Madame de Staël's role as a mediator for contemporary German ideas", when Madame de Staël was (as Henry Crabb Robinson pointed out at the time) ignorant of German philosophy. Moreover, her intention in writing about Germany was propagandist and popularizing, which scarcely describes Coleridge's relations with German thought. Finally, it is simply not true that in the 1820s "German studies and German mysticism were fashionable". The figure of "German Romanticism" flits through the book like a ghost in a Gothic novel, changing its shape for convenience, and never appearing in more than a vague outline.

Marilyn Butler is at her best in this book, as in her excellent previous studies of Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and Peacock, when she concentrates on an individual author whose work she admires and perceives

in its historical context. Thus she offers suggestive insights into Blake's relations with radical dissent and his later retreat into pietism and mysticism; she brings out well the circumstances under which well the circumstances under which "Kant" was reviewed politically in the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*; and Shelley's and Peacock's enthusiasm for Greek poetry and philosophy around 1817 is persuasively linked to an earlier interest in Greek mythology and mores, such as that manifested in Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*. One welcomes, too, her reminder that the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* has been read one-sidedly in the past:

If ever a phrase has been taken to define Romanticism in our popular notion of it, it is that part of the Preface that declares poetry to be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". But in its context, like a true son of the Enlightenment, putting rational thought, moral intention and social utility above the subjective, emotional side of the mind, and above the claims of self-expression.

Yet Butler does less than justice to Wordsworth's complex achievement as poet and critic. In part this is because no critic could tackle fully the implications (and contradictions) of Wordsworth's statements on poetic dictation, the proper subject matter for poetry, metre and rhyme, the poet's function, and the language of poetry, in the few pages here devoted to Wordsworth. But the failure to do justice to Wordsworth derives in part, too, from her strong sense of the pattern of Romanticism, which leads her to overstate Wordsworth's exaltation of the solitary and the solipsistic, against which she sees the younger Romantics' concern with the social role of the poet. Towards the end of the book, she admits that the younger generation "magnified their disagreement with the older literary generation, and in particular exaggerated the extent to which the Lakists actually stood for the way of the hermit". But in fact it fits her own thesis earlier on to endorse, even to exaggerate, this antagonism. For example, she gives less than due attention to the ambivalence of Keats's attitude to Wordsworth (or May, Shelley's, for that matter), whose "egotistical" mode he did, after all, dignify with the substantive "sublime".

In her chapter on Coleridge, Dr Butler defines acutely Coleridge's complex role, and she says he "found his own intellectual position horribly compromised by the schism within the radical movement between Christians and Deists, which meant that though he still notionally abhorred 'aristocracy', his profoundest disagreements were with his fellow-liberals". However, when she stands back to view the overall pattern, her perspective on Coleridge becomes peculiar, and surely distorting, as in her sweeping review of the *raison d'être* of *Biographia Literaria*:

The humble, modest, quietist tone of the counter-revolution functions as an appropriate answer to the self-assertion of Neoclassicism. Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* needs a text to preach against, and picks the *Lyrical Ballads* of his own friend Wordsworth in unregenerate days.

The reader of this book is constantly stimulated, provoked into considering complex cultural conditions both in close detail and from the larger historical viewpoint. One passage, taken from the chapter on the younger Romantics, may serve to illustrate how this ambitious approach earns our admiration; yet at the same time arouses some disagreement with its brief, bold statements:

Viewed in the light of their revived and conscious classicism, the so-called "younger Romantics" — Byron, Shelley and Keats — make, together with their friends Peacock, Hunt and Hazlitt, a clearly defined literary group. Nevertheless their movement defines itself by what it is

not. It is not the literature of the North-German Romanticism, in Madame de Staël's account of it, which is introspective and Christian. It is not like Wordsworth's *Excursion*, reflective, autobiographical, exalting privacy and withdrawal from society. Nor is it like the ideal of art which Coleridge sketches in the *Lay Sermons* and especially in the *Biographia Literaria* — religious, medievalist and profoundly exclusive. The English literary writers of the post-war period are extrovert not introvert, and pagan not Christian. They prefer objective forms, such as narrative and drama, to the confessional forms like autobiography. In keeping with their formal sense and their inclination to objectivity, they use traditional genres — elegy, ode, drama, verse epistle — more consistently and consciously than their elders. Moreover their poems are deliberately structured, often along dialectical lines that suggest the rational play of mind.

The points of reference here are surely often unstable: a movement (of younger English Romantics) which is not a movement and is to be defined in terms of a different movement — German Romanticism — but that only, as Marilyn Butler cautiously and correctly qualifies it, "in Madame de Staël's account of it" (an imperfect one); Coleridge's ideal of art as "medievalist"; the spare opposition of pagan to Christian, extrovert to introvert; the implicit devaluing of the importance of the lyric form in the works of Shelley and Keats in the interests of seeing the younger Romantics seeking "objective forms, such as narrative and drama". Did not Wordsworth, Coleridge, and most of the German Romantic poets write in these forms too?

The most exciting judgments in the book are those on Scott. Here Marilyn Butler's obvious enthusiasm for an individual writer is successfully linked to her larger aim to reread the history of Romanticism. She points out that notions of Scott as Tory and medievalizing are unstable; that Scott's subject in his novels is more genuinely revolution than Scotland, and that his attitude towards revolution is by no means entirely negative. "Nothing," she writes, "is more significant in the book than his sense of the interdependence of the classes. The old aristocracy are pitiful and even a little ridiculous when they start asserting their traditional claims as chieftains." And she gives a convincing reason for Scott's having averted, rather than Jane Austen, as a model for the great Victorian novelists, as well as for European writers of the nineteenth century:

Scott is a great writer, subtle, sane, very original in the fable he devises for his time. His novels are formally much more original than Jane Austen's, and for a number of reasons the mode he developed proved more useful to his successors. He devised a vehicle that could convey a portrait of contemporary society, and of the same time represent as central the plight of individuals whose lives were caught up in an impersonal mechanism.

If discriminatingly read, this book is full of information and insights for the reader. It is both too brief and too detailed and allusive to serve as a new introduction to Romantic literature. As a comprehensive panorama of the culture of the age it is impressive and provocative, but suffers, perhaps inevitably, from a problem analogous to Hume's self-confessed philosophical dilemma. Marilyn Butler, like Hume, starts from a perception of a large, complex phenomenon, breaking it down into its constituent parts; the problem arises when she attempts to fit the often brilliantly identified individual elements back into the whole without distortion. She is an acute and discriminating critic, formidable when dealing with individual authors who interest (rather than irritate) her, but *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*, with all its fine insights, attempts the larger view with only a moderate degree of success.

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From the ego to the Self

By Anthony Storr

JOHN RAPHAEL STAUE: The Adult Development of C. J. Jung 120pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £7.50. 0 7100 0749 3

Until recently, studies of human growth and development have been chiefly concentrated upon infancy and childhood. Underlying this emphasis has been the assumption that the child is father to the man, and that, once adulthood has been attained, little further change, for good or ill, can be expected. This was certainly the view of the early psychoanalysts, who were more reluctant than they are today to accept for treatment those who were past middle age. However, Erik Erikson, because of his interest in biography, came to realize that human beings, especially if they are men of genius, continue to change and develop throughout their lives, and Erikson's hypothetical chart of growth includes stages of early, middle, and later adulthood. During the past decade a number of books concerned with adult development have emerged from the United States. Some are popular works, designed to reassure an ageing population that they too can be "creative" and have titles like *Your Second Life*. Others, notably works by Nevitt Sanford and

by Daniel Levinson and his collaborators, are serious, though sometimes over-detailed, attempts to map the changes which occur during the various periods of adult life. As these authors will surely agree, our knowledge of these changes is sadly incomplete.

In this present book, John Raphael Staude's laudable ambition has been to draw attention to the fact that Jung anticipated recent history by emphasizing change in middle age and after, and to link Jung's concepts of adult development with those of others. It is perhaps deliberately intended that the title of his book can be taken in two different senses. As Staude realizes, Jung's ideas about adult development are inseparable from the changes which took place within himself after his parting with Freud. During the years of the First World War, Jung went through a mid-life crisis of monumental proportions which he describes with candour in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. This "confrontation with the unconscious", as he calls it, consisted of series of cataclysmic dreams and visions which seemed to Jung to possess a life of their own, and which led him toward a new, individual adaptation. He said himself that the whole of his later creative activity took origin from the dreams and fantasies which, as it were, assailed him during these significant years.

Staude rightly draws attention to the fact that many creative people have been through a rather similar mid-life crisis. Some, like Nietzsche and van Gogh, succumbed to insanity, or like Dylan Thomas and Scott Fitzgerald, destroyed themselves. Isaac Newton experienced a period of mental illness and emerged with his creative activity reduced, if not abolished. Others, like Jung, are enriched by their experience. But what determines the intensity of the crisis, or governs its outcome, remains mysterious. Jung's crisis followed his break with Freud; and it is true that Jung had been Freud's favorite ally, his "Crown Prince". We know that, although Jung was never a wholehearted adherent of Freud's theories, it was nevertheless deeply disturbing to him to realize that his own developing ideas must necessarily involve their parting. But this is hardly enough to account for the intensity of Jung's disturbance, during which he himself records that he felt "menaced by a psychosis". Staude rightly emphasizes the fact that Jung, from childhood onwards, had always felt himself to be a "divided self". Jung's conception of the mind always owed more to Janet than to Freud in that he thought in terms of dissociation and multiple personality rather than in terms of repression; and it was the concept of integrating or uniting divided selves rather than of undoing repression which dominated Jung's thinking from the beginning to the end of his long life.

The spiritual journey upon which Jung embarked during his own mid-life crisis was named by him the process of individuation. The endpoint of this journey, marked by the appearance of mandalas and quaternary symbols, was a new integration in which the individual concerned acknowledged that the course of his life was not at the command of his ego but subject to the direction of what Jung called the Self; that is, to the wholeness of both conscious and unconscious rather than to the limited area of personality with which the ego might identify itself. Jung relied on his dreams to give him guidance, and encouraged his patients to do likewise. He thus acknowledged an authority which emanated from within, but which was not of his making; and it is not surprising that he described the attitude of the integrated man as "religious", nor that he equated experience of the Self with experience of the Deity.

Although Jung always maintained that the individuation process was not for everyone, but only for those in whom an overdeveloped consciousness had diverged too far from the unconscious, he nevertheless extolled it as the task of the mature (as we are all prone to do), and elevated individuation into a spiritual journey which seemed only to be completed by a few rare souls, usually by those undergoing Jungian analysis. Staude, though deeply versed in Jungian psychology, having

sat at the feet of some of the leading Jungian analysts in Zurich, is able to maintain a critical stance. His conclusion is that "Jung's theory of the individuation process in the second half of life was too closely tied to his own unique experience and to his personality type". However, he regards Jung's introverted views as a valuable corrective to current American thinking which emphasizes ego-strength, competence, and mastery, and which leaves no room for the kind of dependence upon the inner voice of God or the soul which Jung described.

Staude recognizes that much of Jung's psychology can be construed as the search for a "natural" religion to stand in the place of adherence to one or other of the orthodox systems of religious belief. He could with advantage have emphasized Jung's disillusion with the conventional Protestantism in which he was reared, which clearly left a gap in his scheme of things which he was unable to tolerate. The influences which shaped Jung's way of thinking have yet to be explored in detail. Staude touches upon Hegel, Plato, and Schopenhauer; and may, perhaps, in a later book, undertake the task of thoroughly assessing their part in shaping Jung's philosophy. However, this book is valuable as it stands. Staude is one of a very small number of authors who have grasped the essence of Jung's psychology without becoming a Jungian convert.

The mechanization of meaning

By Christopher Bollas

J.-B. PONTALIS: *Frontiers in Psychoanalysis. Between the Dream and the Psychic Pain* Translated by Catherine Cullen and Phillip Cullen 224pp. Hogarth Press. £12.50. 0 7012 0453 2

J.-B. Pontalis is more effectively critical of psychoanalytic theory and practice than any writer in the literature before him, with the salient exception of Freud himself. Nothing has done more damage both within and without psychoanalysis than the presence of those analysts who believe they have found the Truth and need only find patients and students upon whom to practice it in order to satisfy themselves. Knowing this, Pontalis insists that the analyst should acknowledge the uncertainty about what is or is not truly inseparable from the clinical situation, for the analysand lives within illusion: of dream, fantasy, and transference. Such illusions convey the truth of his subjective relation to reality but the universality of the phenomenon should warn the analyst against any dogmatic adherence to his part to theory as an anchor in reality.

Pontalis's book is clearly directed at those psychoanalysts who stick too rigidly to one or other school of analytical thought. Theory is both too close to the logic of the unconscious and, at the same time, too distant from clinical reality to command so much faith within psychoanalysis; and, in some ways, there is little psychoanalytical about it. Theorizing, indeed, involves something of a renunciation of the real relation between patient and analyst, as if the analyst needed some protection against the polysemous perversity of the unconscious. Pontalis believes that there is something of a resistance within psychoanalysis to itself, which takes the form of the analyst converting himself into an "interpreting machine" in order to translate the material produced by the patient. The intersection of analyst and patient is thus mechanized.

Because he was so absorbed in understanding the dream-work, Freud neglected the dreamer's experience in the dream. For Pontalis, the dream is not simply a body of material for dissection; he is reluctant to interpret its meaning until he

has understood "what it represents in terms of experience or as a refusal of this experience." The dream is the object between the analyst and the patient, an object which induces a sliding of the senses from the visual to the verbal. It is, theoretically, antithetical to reality, yet oddly it is also the core of perception itself, as it crystallizes the workings of the psyche. How is the analyst to receive the dream? For Pontalis much contemporary analytical work with dreams, if it is characterized by the analyst "deconstructing" the dream-codes alone, is equivalent to a new symptom, this time derived from psychoanalysis itself. This symptom he terms "mentation", which he differentiates from intellectualization, claiming that it is "the inverse equivalent of conversion: in this case the 'mysterious leap' would be from the psychic to the mental". This is not a defence against meaning as such but a resistance to experience; a refusal of that emotional "presence" which should be part of our understanding of a person's internal world.

As an antidote to hermeneutical zeal Pontalis suggests that we all consult that maverick analyst, D. W. Winnicott. For Winnicott saw the danger of psychoanalysis developing its own "false self-system" as an unconscious expression of the analyst's refusal of his patients. This is what Pontalis calls the analyst's "interpreting machine", which he claims often results in either a mutual refusal of experience between analyst and patient or in a kind of terror induced by the analyst's insistence that he has found the key to the Truth hidden in the patient's discourse, a "method of procedure" that is in danger of instigating a kind of terrorism - persecution and docility. As Winnicott became wary (and also weary) of the patient's ability to produce good analytical material, so he became more attentive to the way a person dreamed or to those experiences of self made coherent in the dream. Pontalis says of Winnicott that "he does not seek the meaning of the conflict in the dream... so much as the capacity the dream bears witness to; he valorizes not the enalysable and manipulative object, but, at a turning point in the consultation, the opening of a space in which the child accepts to progress with his therapist". (The same is true for the adult in analysis.)

One senses that in turning so frequently to Winnicott, Pontalis is trying to persuade psychoanalysts to take themselves to a good doctor, so

as to be cured of certain ailments which have evolved from the refusal to be protected against the very notion of the dream. The dream is the object between the analyst and the patient, an object which induces a sliding of the senses from the visual to the verbal. It is, theoretically, antithetical to reality, yet oddly it is also the core of perception itself, as it crystallizes the workings of the psyche. How is the analyst to receive the dream? For Pontalis much contemporary analytical work with dreams, if it is characterized by the analyst "deconstructing" the dream-codes alone, is equivalent to a new symptom, this time derived from psychoanalysis itself. This symptom he terms "mentation", which he differentiates from intellectualization, claiming that it is "the inverse equivalent of conversion: in this case the 'mysterious leap' would be from the psychic to the mental". This is not a defence against meaning as such but a resistance to experience; a refusal of that emotional "presence" which should be part of our understanding of a person's internal world.

Pontalis maintains an intellectual rigour although he allows himself to

Freud freudianized

By Clive Gordon

MICHEL SCHNEIDER: *Blessures de mémoire* 289pp. Paris: Gallimard.

Blessures de mémoire - meaning both wounds and memories and a memory which wounds - is a remarkable, if a frustrating, first book by Michel Schneider. The memories in question are those of Freud himself, and Schneider's aim is to complete, or "heal" them: in effect to psychoanalyse the birth of psychoanalysis.

This is a novel and also a highly ambitious enterprise, and it is partly this ambition which accounts for the reader's frustration. Turning psychoanalysis's own methods back on to itself, and on to its genesis in Freud's mind, raises a number of profound and disturbing questions, but these are not taken up by Schneider; for example, if the act of psychoanalysis is itself locked in its own neurotic obsessions, then what is its value? And what is the value of an inquiry which uses those self-same methods to make its point? Schneider does not say.

His procedure is closely to examining three crucial events in the genesis of psychoanalytic theory: Freud's interpretation of his dream of "Irma's injection" in 1895; his founding of the first "official" psychoanalytic society in 1910; and the release into madness of his most famous case, the Wolf-Man, in 1926. The dream of Irma's injection is set against a surgical "slip" by Freud's friend Fliess, a few months earlier, when 50 cm of gauze had been

speaking freely and quite often fancifully. For Freud, he says, the dream was a displaced maternal body: "He committed incest with the body of his dream, penetrated their secret and wrote the book that made him conqueror and possessor of the terra incognita." As decipherer of an action that has already taken place, Freud emerges as Oedipus, and the analytical practice of breaking the dream into its parts is a fulfilment of the analyst's displaced Oedipal desire. Many analysts may find this irritating and ask just how Pontalis claims to have found it out, but he is developing an idea, and later on in this brilliantly imaginative book, the

concept of dream as mother yields a more profound point, that the psyche's essence is the mother in us all, as it takes over that part of the mother which cares for the child. "We will not talk here," he writes, "of the mother's internalization, real or imaginary, as a good or bad object. Rather, we will claim that the absent mother makes our inside."

Whether he is writing on Breton, Rousseau, or Merleau-Ponty, (with whom he studied), or whether he focuses on sexuality, the Self, psychic pain, or on what he terms "death-work", Pontalis is truly stimulating.

absentmindedly left behind in the nose of one of Freud's female patients during a sinus operation. From this lapse, Schneider constructs an elaborate thesis of unconscious association and latent significance of the gauze in Fliess's penis, and the object of his attention is Freud. The "bungled act" is evidence of repressed homosexuality, and it is this which lies behind Freud's famous, and (dare I say it?) seminal, dream.

As with all psychoanalytical interpretation, the proof is in the detail, in the gradual assembly of interlocking evidence, no one piece of which convinces on its own. In this case, by careful reference to Freud's correspondence and other biographical sources, Schneider puts forward a powerful argument to support his highly contentious thesis. What we get is a kind of phrase-book in which a set of events (surrounding the dream) is translated, fitfully and incompletely, into a shifting language of unconscious formation and play - in which the (unanswerable) "truth" of the matter lies.

Elsewhere, Schneider is less convincing; his chapter on the founding of the first psychoanalytic society rests on the premise that such acts of "getting together" are sublimated homosexual acts. If we wonder why they should be homosexual, we have the answer: "Il n'en est pas d'autre".

This is the book's weakest chapter: in the later analysis we get moments of analytical brilliance, in particular in the discussion of Freud's cancer. Schneider brings out a startling parallel between the course of the disease in Freud and the development of his psychoanalytical theory, between the personal tragedy and the

public doctrine. The parallel will be a disturbing one for those who believe in the purity of the theory, and this book certainly makes us conscious of how accident-prone the theory is. In trying to go to the heart of Freud's theory of female sexuality, when we discover the extent to which his formulation of it was bound up with the death of his daughter, and then of her son Heinele (of whom Freud wrote that he had never loved anyone more), and with his own vasectomy in 1923?

Psychoanalysis is a fashionable subject in France growing there like a cancer, to use Freud's own simile and this has made the English-speaking world suspicious, particularly of the verbal posturing that goes with it and of which there is ample measure in *Blessures de mémoire*. If a reader were to open this book at random and fall on the phrase "d'où viennent les analystes?" (page 274), he might well read no more, but he would be making a mistake.

A number of articles and essays by Henry A. Murray have been collected in a single volume, *Selections de la Psychologie de Henry A. Murray*, edited by Edwin S. Schneiderman (641pp. Harper, 1979, £25.50, 05 014039 9). "Personology" is Murray's name for a multidisciplinary attempt to examine man's life in all its aspects, conscious and unconscious, and including creativity. The essays include an introduction to Malville's *Pierre*, and a study of different cultural versions of Satan.

The investigators wanted me to admit to my crimes against Soviet authority. Since I knew of no such crimes that I had committed there was naturally nothing for me to confess.

"Do you know what Gorky said about enemies who won't surrender?" asked my investigator. "They have to be destroyed!"

"That has no bearing on me," I answered.

The reference to Gorky was repeated every time that some other investigator came into the office and learnt that I was a writer.

I protested against my "unwanted arrest" against the rough treatment, the shouting and the abuse. I refer-

The Story of My Imprisonment

By N. A. Zabolotsky

Among the handful of poets of post-Revolutionary Russia who are generally acknowledged to be great, Nikolay Zabolotsky (1903-1958) is probably the least known or documented in the West. He sprang not from the old intelligentsia but from peasant stock in the remote Vyatka (Kirov) province; his first small book of poems (Scrolls, 1929) caused a success de scandale with its grotesquely disturbing visions of Leningrad under the New Economic Policy. His work of the 1930s was equally unusual in its strange metaphors and profound exploration of natural-philosophical concerns.

For ten years his name disappeared from literature; it was known he had been arrested, though why and in what circumstances remained obscure. From 1947 he began to appear in print again, though infrequently; a great deal of his work has been published only since he died in 1958. Retrospective editions appeared in the Soviet Union in 1965 and 1972, resurrecting his early work and a mass of hitherto unknown material; his reputation in Russia and abroad has grown accordingly during the past decade.

In the course of his career Zabolotsky's manner of writing changed strikingly: compared with the shifting textures, obscurities and often shocking imagery of his first poems his late manner appears lucid, classically smooth and restrained. This transformation has given rise to much comment, often adverse, though recent commentators have tended to ascribe this progression to inner logic rather than imposed necessity; among the later poems are certainly some of Zabolotsky's masterpieces. Clearly the nature and effects of the long lacuna in his writing career are a matter of

considerable importance in assessing his work as a whole. Zabolotsky himself, far from his staid image of poetic mission, was a rather relaxed and self-effacing man; he seldom spoke of his imprisonment even to his closest friends, and his poetry makes no direct reference to it.

The existence of a previously unknown autobiographical manuscript - of unimpeachable authenticity, though it appears not to have circulated in samizdat - recounting the circumstances of his arrest and subsequent events thus not only comes as a surprise, but has important literary-historical significance. Zabolotsky is probably unique as an already established Soviet writer to survive arrest in 1937-38, serve his sentence and live in give us his account of it. (He was never, incidentally, active in politics, nor at any stage of his life did he behave otherwise than as a loyal Soviet citizen.) But apart from its value as firsthand evidence on a dark period in the poet's life, the document has intrinsic interest as a gripping yet soberly presented account of what happened to victims of the "Yezhovshchina", the worst period of Stalin's Terror, when under Yezhov the NKVD indulged not only in indiscriminate arrests but in the crudest methods of interrogation and trial. Many details in it confirm, and are confirmed by, those collated in the standard work on the subject (Robert Conquest: *The Great Terror*, 2nd ed., 1973) - where Zabolotsky's case is mentioned, though imprecisely; others amplify or modify what is known from other victims' accounts. This first translation of Zabolotsky's manuscript is my own, and the first publication in any language.

ROBIN MILNER-GULLAND

it happened in Leningrad on March 19, 1938. Miroshnichenko, Secretary of the Leningrad branch of the Union of Writers, summoned me to the office on urgent business. In his room sat two men I did not know, dressed in plain clothes.

"These comrades want a word with you," said Miroshnichenko. One of the strangers showed me his NKVD card.

"We're going to have to have a talk with you at your home," he said. In the car they had waiting for me we travelled to my home by the Orlovoev Canal. My wife was ill in bed in our room with angina. I told her what was happening. The NKVD man showed me a warrant for my arrest.

"So this is what we have come to!" I said, embracing my wife and showing her the warrant.

The search began. They sorted out two cases full of books and manuscripts. I said my farewells to my family. My small daughter was then eleven months old. As I kissed her she whispered "Daddy!" for the first time. We went out and walked along the corridor to the staircase. There, upon my wife rushed after us with a cry of horror. At the front door we parted.

I was taken to the Remed Prison (DPZ in Russian) attached to the so-called "Big House" on Litvynsky Prospekt. I was searched; my suitcase, scarf, braces and collar were taken away, the metal buttons were cut off my suit and I was locked into a tiny cell. After a short time I was ordered to leave my things in another cell and was taken along the corridors to interrogation.

There began an interrogation that lasted about four days and nights without a break. Hard upon the first words came a refusal to answer threats. Since I refused to admit to having committed any sort of crime they took me out of the normal investigators' room, and thereafter the interrogation was mostly conducted in the office of my personnel investigator, Nikolay Nikolayevich Lupandin, and his deputy, Merkur'yev. The latter had been brought in to assist the NKVD officials, who at the time could not cope with their work because of the large number of those arrested.

The investigators wanted me to admit to my crimes against Soviet authority. Since I knew of no such crimes that I had committed there was naturally nothing for me to confess.

"Do you know what Gorky said about enemies who won't surrender?" asked my investigator. "They have to be destroyed!"

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I protested against my "unwanted arrest" against the rough treatment, the shouting and the abuse. I refer-

red to the rights which I, like every citizen, enjoyed under the Soviet constitution.

"The Constitution stops operating at our front door," answered the investigator mockingly.

During the first few days they beat me, trying to destroy my morality and exhaust me physically. I was not given food. I was not allowed to sleep. The investigators worked in shifts, while I sat motionless on a chair in front of their desk for days and nights on end. Through the wall, from the next office, someone's frantic shrieks could be heard from time to time. My legs began to swell, and on the third day I had to pull off my shoes, since I could no longer stand the pain in my feet. Consciousness started to dim, and I concentrated all my powers on answering rationally and not letting slip any wrong word relating to the people I was being questioned about. However, the interrogation sometimes stopped and we sat in silence. The investigator would write down something, I would attempt to sleep - but he would wake me up immediately.

In the course of the interrogation it emerged that the NKVD was trying to build up a case against some kind of counter-revolutionary writers' organization. N.S. Tikhonov (I) was supposed to be made the head of this organization. It was claimed that its members included various Leningrad writers who had already been arrested: Benedikt Lifshits, Elena Tager, Georgy Kuklin, I think Boris Konovlov, somebody else, and finally, myself. Great efforts were made to obtain information about Fedin and Marshak. Mention was often made of N.M. Oleynikov, T.I. Tabidze, D.I. Kharmis and A.I.

I was in, but I recollect experiencing a sense of inner relief and exaltation in making a dishonourable man of me. Evidently consciousness was still flickering within me if I could memorize those circumstances and recall them to this day.

I do not know how long this went on. Finally they threw me out into another room. Stunned by a blow from behind, I fell down; I began to get up, but a second blow followed,

to the face. I lost consciousness. I came to, creaking on the water mat someone was pouring over me. Someone picked me up and, so it seemed, began pulling my clothes off. Again I lost consciousness. Hardly had I come round again than some characters whom I did not know started dragging me along the stone corridors of the prison, hitting me and mocking my defencelessness. They pulled me into a cell with an iron mesh door, whose floor was lower than that of the corridor, and locked me in. When I recovered (I do not know how soon that occurred) my first thought was: let me defend myself! Defend myself, so as not to let these people kill me, or at least not give my life away for nothing! In the cell there stood a heavy iron bed. I dragged it to the mesh door and propped it under the door-handle. So that the handle could not come away from the bedstead I tied them together with the towel that I had been wearing instead of a scarf.

While busy with this I was surprised by my tormentors. They burst themselves at the door so as to undo the towel but I grabbed a mop that was standing in the corner, and using it as a lance I defeated myself as best I could; soon I had chased all the warders away from my door. To get the better of me they had to drag along a fireman's hose and get it into action: the high-pressure jet of water struck me and scorched my body. They used this jet to push me into a corner, and after lengthy efforts a whole crowd of them burst into the cell. Thereupon I was severely beaten up and kicked with jackboots; subsequently the doctors were amazed that my internal organs were still intact, so severe were the marks of my ordeal.

I do not know how long this went on. Finally they threw me out into another room. Stunned by a blow from behind, I fell down; I began to get up, but a second blow followed,

I came to from a dreadful pain in my right arm. I lay with my arms tied to the iron bedstead behind my back. One of the cross-bars was biting into my arm and hurting me intolerably. I imagined that the room was being flooded with water, that its level was rising every moment and that it was about to cover me, head and all. I yelled in desperation and demanded that some governor of the prison should order me to be freed. This went on for an interminable time. Afterwards all became confused in my consciousness. I recollected that I came round on a wooden bunk-bed. Everything around was wet; my clothes were soaked through, and near by lay my jacket, also soaking wet and heavy as a stone. Thereafter I remember, as if in a dream, that people hauled me under the arms across a yard. . . . When consciousness again returned I was already in a hospital for the insane.

The prison hospital of the Institute of Forensic Psychiatry stood not far from the Remand Prison. Here, if I am not mistaken, I was held for about two weeks, first in a violent, then in a quiet ward.

My condition was grave: I was shattered and no longer a responsible human being, while I was physically a wreck from my torments, from hunger and from lack of sleep. But a glimmer of consciousness still flickered within me or returned from time to time. Thus I will remember how appalled the nurse was as she took my clothes away: her hands and lips were trembling. I neither remember, nor indeed know, how I was treated in the initial stages. I recollect only that I drank whole cupsful of some thickish liquid that made my head seem wooden and inequable. In my first fit of despair I hastened to tell the doctors about all that had happened to me, but they merely kept saying: "Calm down! Then you'll be able to justify yourself in court." During those days the hospital was my refuge, and the doctors, even if they did not give me much in the way of treatment, at least did not torture me. Among them I remember Dr Gontarev and the woman doctor Nina Kelbevs-kaya.

Among the patients I recall one lunatic who, imitating a loudspeaker, often used to stand at the head of my bed glorifying Stalin in a trumpet-like voice. Another ran around on all fours, barking like a dog. These were the most disturbed of the patients. Madness descended upon the others only from time to time. Normally they kept quiet, smiling sarcastically or gesticulating, or lay motionless in their beds.

After a few days I began to get better and realized with horror that should soon have to return to the place of torment. This occurred on one of the medical rounds, when, in answer to the doctor's question as to how I came by the black consciousness on my body I answered: "I fell down and bruised myself." I noticed the doctors glancing round at each other.

A Small Town on the Coast

The youngest son who made it to the city. Stays in the city. His twin passions are for music and mathematics; horizontal of roof, gutters. The vertical streetlamp tapering to a curve. And the continuous whispering gaze of traffic. Late at night - unmistakably the sea, the sea. That mocked him even then, daring him to cross it.

Some girls can be impressed by his talk of that. Daybreak and a clean world. Now on winter Sundays. His bed's the only warm place, where he remembers. Schoolmates, cousins, the faces passing and repassing. In the cobbled square. His mother still writes, bawling. Of his sister's seven children and Space Invaders. In the new arcade that used to be the baker's.

Charles Boyle

it was clear that consciousness had come back to me — I no longer wished to put the blame on the investigators, so us not to worsen my own position. However, I was still very weak, psychologically unstable, and found every breath I took difficult and painful, and these circumstances postponed my discharge for a few days.

On my return to the prison I was expecting to be taken to interrogation again, and made myself ready for anything so long as I did not incriminate either myself or others. I was not, however, taken to interrogation; instead I was thrown into one of the large common cells filled to bursting with prisoners. It was a big room intended for twelve to fifteen men, with a mesh door giving on to the prison corridor. There were seventy to eighty people in it, sometimes rising to a hundred. Clouds of steam and the special prison stench reached me in the corridor, and I remember being astonished by it. They could hardly shut the door after me, and I found myself in a crowd of people wedged tight against each other or sitting in disorderly heaps all over the room. Learning that the newcomer was a writer, my neighbours informed me that the cell contained other writers too, and soon they brought along P.N. Medvedev and D.I. Vygodsky, who had been arrested before me. Seeing the sad state I was in, my comrades fixed me up a place in some corner. Thus began my prison life in the proper sense.

There are certain common characteristics signs that distinguish the majority of free people from the unfree. The former are sufficiently self-confident, have more or less a sense of their own worth, and react to external irritations calmly and sensibly. In the years of my imprisonment the average person, deprived of his liberty without due cause, humiliated, insulted, frightened and knocked out of his senses by the fantastic environment into which he had suddenly come, more often than not would lose the individuality that in freedom was his. Like a hare in a trap he would rush around helplessly, pushing at open doors, pleading his innocence, trembling with fear before worthless degenerates, losing his human qualities; he would be suspicious of everybody, would lose faith in those nearest him and would himself reveal his own lowest qualities, previously hidden from outsiders. After a few days of prison treatment the features of a slave would be clearly apparent on his countenance, and the lie fostered upon him would begin to put down roots in his confused and trembling soul.

In the Remand Prison, where people were held only during the period of investigation, this process of spiritual decay was only just beginning in people. Here one could observe all aspects of despair and all the manifestations of numbed hopelessness, of convulsive hysterical joy and of cynical indifference to everything in the world, including one's own life. It was strange to see these grown men now groaning, now fainting, now shaking with fear, persecuted and pitiable. I was told that the writer Adrian Pistrovsky, who had been in the cell not long before me, lost any human appearance in his grief, flung himself about the cell, soiled his chest with some sort of nail and at night got up to shambolic things for all the cell to see. But in this respect the record was apparently held by Valentin Stenich, who was in the adjoining cell. An aesthete, snob and gourmand in ordinary life, by the accounts of the prisoners he quickly found a common language with the investigators, and for a packet of cigarettes would sign any sort of testimony. In fairness one must say that alongside such people there were others who maintained their human dignity at the expense of the greatest efforts. Often these decent people had until their arrest been humble cogs in our society, while the great of the world were frequently changed in prison into the pitiful semblance of men. Prison purified people, but not in the sense that Zakovsky (3) and his fellow bosses wanted.

This process of human disintegration went on before the eyes of the whole cell. A man could not be

alone here for a single moment, and he even had to attend to his needs at an open lavatory in the same place. He who wanted to weep wept in public, and the sense of natural shame made his pain ten times worse. He who wanted to commit suicide was obliged to grit his teeth and at night, under his blanket, attempt to open his veins with a splinter of glass — but somebody's sleepless eye would quickly discover the would-be suicide, and his comrades would disarm him. This life in public was an additional torment, but at the same time it assisted many to live through their intolerable sufferings.

The cell in which I found myself was like a huge, perpetually buzzing anthill, where all day long people trampled about in close proximity, breathed in each other's exhalations; they had to step over prostrate bodies as they walked, quarrelled and made peace, wept and laughed. Ordinary criminals were mixed in with the political; but in 1937-38 the political were ten times more numerous, and thus the criminals behaved timidly and unselfconfidently in the prison. In the camps they were our overlords, but in prison they were scarcely noticeable. In charge of our cell there was an elected leader by the name of Getman. On him depended the ordering of our lives. He allocated places — where one was to sleep and sit — according to one's length of imprisonment, apportioned rations and supervised good order. Full agreement and discipline were needed to arrange everyone for the night. Space was such that people could lie down only on their side, jammed tight against each other, and even then not all at once but in two shifts. Night arrangements were carried out at the leader's command, and it was an astonishing performance of regulated, precisely calculated movements and transpositions worked out by many "generations" of prisoners who had had to live in a tight-packed throng and who gradually passed on their acquired skills to newcomers.

By day the cell lived a sluggish and tedious life. Every trivial drum action — sewing on a button, mending torn clothes, going to the lavatory — grew into a major problem. Thus to go to the lavatory one had to wait in a queue for not less than half an hour. Interest was brought into the daily routine only by breakfast, lunch and supper. In the Remand Prison the food was tolerable, and the prisoners did not go hungry. Searches were another form of entertainment. They took place regularly and were of a humiliating nature. They only partially

fulfilled their purpose, since every prisoner knew dozens of ways to hide his needle, his pencil-end or (greatest treasure of all) his pen-knife or razor-blade. Prisoners were scarcely ever summoned to interrogation during the day.

Interrogations used to begin at night, when the whole multi-storey facade on Liteyny Prospekt was flooded with hundreds of lights, and hundreds of sergeants, lieutenants and captains of the State Security together with their assistants got down to their routine tasks. The vast stone courtyard of the building, overlooked by the open windows of the offices, was filled with the groans and soul-rending screams of men being beaten up. The whole cell shuddered as if an electric current had suddenly passed through it, and dumb terror would again appear in the eyes of the prisoners. So as to drown these screams they often stationed heavy lornes in the courtyard with their engines running. But beyond the roar of the engines our imaginations pictured something already totally indescribable and our nervous agitation reached an extreme pitch.

From time to time one of the prisoners would be fetched out for interrogation. He would be summoned in the following way:

"Ivynov! the warden would yell, coming up to the mesh door.

"Vasily Petrovich! the prisoner would have to answer, giving his first two names.

"To the investigator!"

The prisoner would be taken out of the cell, searched and led along corridors to the NKVD building. In all the corridors there had been set up lightly-sealed wooden cabins, rather like cupboards or telephone-boxes. To avoid meeting other detainees who might appear at the end of the corridor the prisoner would normally be pushed into one such cabin, where he would have to wait till the other man had been led past.

From time to time those who had already been interrogated returned to the cell; sometimes they were pushed inside in complete prostration, while others almost had to be carried in, and subsequently we would spend a long time eering for these unfortunates, giving them cigarettes and water to drink. Moreover it often happened that a warden would come merely to collect a prisoner's belongings, while the prisoner called to interrogation did not return to the cell.

Mockery and blows were the lot of those who at that time conducted themselves otherwise than the way

the interrogator wanted: ie, those who simply did not wish to denounce others.

D. I. Vygodsky, a most honourable man, a talented writer and already old, was dragged by the beard and spat upon in the face by an investigator. A sixty-year-old professor of mathematics, my neighbour in the cell, with a disease of the liver, was made to get down on hands and knees by a sadistic investigator and kept in this position for hours on end, so as to exacerbate his illness and cause intolerable sufferings. Once on the way to interrogation I was accidentally pushed into the wrong office and saw a beautiful young woman in a black dress lifting an investigator in the face; he seized her by the hair, threw her to the floor and started to kick her with his boots. I was at once hauled out of the room, and behind my back I heard her terrifying screams.

How did the prisoners try to explain these perversions of the legal process, these inhuman tortures and torments? Most of them were convinced that they had genuinely been mistaken for major criminals. There were tales of one unfortunate who at every hearing frantically yelled, "Long live Stalin!" Two fellows would hit him with rubber truncheons wrapped in newspaper and he, writhing with pain, glorified Stalin, wishing that way to demonstrate his orthodoxy. The shadow of a guess flickered through the minds of the most sensible, and others were evidently not far from a true understanding of the matter, but all such people, persecuted and terrorized, dared not share their thoughts with each other, since not without reason they assumed that spies and secret informers, willing and unwilling, were busy in the cell. In my own head there grew the curious conviction that we were in the hands of the fascists, who right under the noses of our authorities had managed to liquidate the Soviet citizens at the centre of the penal system. I confided this guess of mine to an old Party member who was sitting beside me, and with terror in his eyes he admitted to me that he thought the same, but had never dared mention it to anyone. And indeed how else could we explain those horrors that were happening around us — we Soviet people brought up in a spirit of dedication to the cause of socialism? Only now, eighteen years later, has life at last shown me how far we were right and how far we were wrong.

At the beginning of October I was informed by note that I had been sentenced by a Special Commission (ie, without trial) to five years in a concentration camp for "Trotskyite counter-revolutionary activity". On October 5 I informed my wife of this and was permitted a meeting with her: a speedy departure on the journey was expected.

The meeting took place at the end of the month. My wife conducted herself sensibly, though she and the young children were already being banished from the city and my fate was unknown to her. She gave me a bag with essentials and we parted, not knowing if we should see each other again.

The convict train got under way on November 8, the day after my family's departure from Leningrad. We were taken in heated wagons under heavy guard, and a couple of days later found ourselves at the Sverdlovsk transit prison, where we stayed about a month. On December 5, the Day of the Soviet Constitution, we began our great Siberian journey — a whole odyssey of fantastic experiences that deserve to be recounted in greater detail.

They transported us with precautions appropriate not to ordinary, beaten, unfortunate folk but to some sort of superhuman villains, capable at any moment of blowing up the whole world, were we to take a single free step. Our train, an endless succession of prison wagons, presented an outlandish sight. On the roof were set up searchlights that lit up the whole area. At various places above and between the wagons machine-guns stuck out; there were guards in great numbers, and at halts they released albatross dogs, ready to rend an escaper limb from limb. On those rare days when we were taken to the bath-house or transferred anywhere they ranged us in lines, made us kneel in the snow and put our hands behind our backs. In that position we would wait until the checking procedure was over, while all around dozens of rifle muzzles peered out at us, and behind, pressing at our very backs, the dogs howled furiously and strained at the leash. We were made to march in close file.

After my return from hospital I was left in peace and not called before the investigator for some time. When interrogations did begin

again — and there were still a few to come — no one hit me any more, and things were limited to the ordinary threats and abuse. Finally in August I was summoned "with my belongings" and transferred to the Kresty Prison.

I remember the boiling hot day when, dressed in a thick woollen coat and carrying a roll of underclothing, I was brought to a small cell at Kresty intended for two people. Ten bare human figures, running with sweat and exhausted from the heat, squatted like Indian gods all round the edge of the cell. I greeted them, stripped off and sat down as the eleventh in their midst. Soon there appeared beneath me a great damp patch on the stone floor. So began my life at Kresty.

In the cell stood one iron bed and on it slept a captain of the Northern Fleet, the recognized cell leader. His legs, injured during interrogation at Archangel, were no more use. The old sea-dog, who had habitually looked death in the eye, was now helpless as a baby.

As Kresty I was not interrogated: evidently the investigation was at an end. The fund got suddenly and shrilly worse, and if we had not had the right to buy extra foodstuffs with our own money we should have been half-starved.

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"One step aside and I open fire!" was the usual warning.

Actually, in the entire two-month journey we got out only at Novosibirsk, Irkutsk and Chita. It goes without saying that no one else was allowed within a mile of us.

Sixty and more days we toiled along the main Siberian line, lingering in sidings for days at a time. There were some forty men in the wagon, as I recollect. A fierce winter had started and the frosts got deeper every day. A little iron stove was kindled in the centre of the wagon; the orderly sat near by and looked after it. At first we had lived on two levels — one half underneath the

other half above on high plank benches ranged along the sides of the wagon, a little lower than a man's height. But soon the cold drove all these below on to the planks; even here, however, packed into a heap for badly warmed, we suffered cruelly from the cold. Bit by bit life turned into purely physiological existence without higher interests, where a man's entire concerns were reduced to not dying of hunger or thirst, not freezing through and not being shot like a rabid dog.

Each man received 300 grammes of bread a day, hot water twice a day and a dinner of thin "balanda" [soup] with a ladle of gruel. For starving and frozen men this food was of course not enough. But even this pitiful ration was given out irregularly — and evidently not always through the fault of the privileged criminal prisoners who served it to us. The fact was that the provisioning of this whole vast mass of prisoners moving at that period through Siberia in endless columns presented a complex economic problem.

At many stations severe cold and poor administration made it impossible to supply men even with water. Once we received no water for about three days, and as we greeted the new year of 1939 somewhere around Lake Baykal we had to lick black sooty licks that had formed on the walls of the wagon from our own exhalations. I shall never manage to forget this New Year's Day feast to the end of my life.

In that wagon I first came up against the world of criminals, who became the bane of life to us who had to drag out our lives beside them, and often under their command.

Criminals — recidivist thieves, robbers, bandits, murderers, with their whole multifarious retinue of sympathizers, assistants and accomplices of various hues and shades — are a people apart, forming a long-established social category that has worked out its own way of life, its own moral code and even its own aesthetic. These men lived by their own laws, and these laws of theirs were stronger than those of any government. They had their own leaders, one word from whom could cost the life of any rank-and-file member of their caste. They were all linked by a common view of life, and for them view and practice of life were one.

Original inhabitants of the prisons and camps, they deeply and genuinely despised us: a motley, variegated and disoriented crowd of chance visitors to their ultramontane world. From their point of view we were pitiful creatures, unworthy of respect and meriting the most merciless exploitation and death. And on occasions when it was in their power they would destroy us with a clear conscience and with the blessing, direct or indirect, of the camp authorities.

I bold to the opinion that a considerable proportion of the criminal fraternity are in fact exceptional people. These are men of outstanding capabilities that for one reason or another have been developed in a criminal direction — hostile to the rational norms of the human community. In the name of their moral code almost all of them are capable of remarkable, at times heroic feats; they would go to their deaths fearlessly, since the contempt of their comrades was for them a hundred times more terrible than any death. In my time, however, the mightiest leaders to the criminal world had already been eliminated. Legends about them were current, and the entire criminal population of the camps saw in these legends their ideals and tried to live according to the precepts of their heroes. There were no more mighty leaders, but their ideology was alive and unscathed.

Somehow, of its own accord, our wagon divided into two groups: those sentenced under Article 58 settled on one side (4) the criminals on the other. Condemned to coexist, we stared at each other with concealed hostility, and only occasionally did this hostility break through to the surface. I remember how once, without any provocation from my side, one of our criminals who was liable to fits and some sort of instantaneous hysteria attacked me with a dog's head. His comrades restrained him and I was unharmed.

But an atmosphere of peculiar psychological tension never left us for a moment, and put its stamp upon our life in the train.

From time to time the authorities appeared in the wagon to carry out a check. So as to verify the numbers they made us all go on to one ledge of planks. At a special command we had to crawl across a board to the other ledge, and they counted us as we did so. The picture is as vivid before me as if it were happening now: black with soot, beards sprouting, we crawl one after the other on all fours like monkeys across the board, lit by the dim glow of lanterns, while a semi-literate guard holds us at rifle-point end counts and counts away, getting muddled in his tricky calculations.

Insects devoured us, and the two baths arranged for us at Irkutsk and Chita did not deliver us from this affliction. Both these baths were sheer torment. Each was like an inferno filled with a wildly cackling throng of devils large and small. There was not the remotest possibility of washing. One felt lucky if one managed to save one's personal possessions from the professional criminals. Loss of possessions indicated almost certain death on the journey. This indeed happened to certain unfortunates: they died without reaching camp. In our wagon there were no fatal incidents.

For more than two months our mournful train dragged its way along the main Trans-Siberian line. Two small ice-paned windows under the ceiling allowed faint light into our wagon during the short hours of daylight. At other times a candle-end glowed in a lantern, and when candles were not given out the whole wagon was plunged into impenetrable darkness. Pressed tightly together we lay in this primordial gloom, listening to the thudding of the wheels and sunk in disconsolate thoughts about our fate. In the mornings we could only just manage to peer out of the window at the limitless expanse of the Siberian fields, the endless snow-covered forest, the sludgy villages and towns, watered over by columns of vertical smoke, the fantastic sheer cliffs of the shores of Lake Baykal. We were being taken further and further, towards the Far East, towards the end of the world . . .

In the first days of February we arrived at Khabarovsk. Here we stopped a long time. Then we were suddenly moved backwards, reached Volochayevka and turned northwards off the main line along a newly built branch. Along both sides of the railway there were glimpses of camps with the watch-towers and settlements of modern "gingerbread houses" all built to the same pattern. The kingdom of the BAM (5) was meeting us, its new settlers. The train stopped, there was a rattling of bolts, and we stepped out from our hiding-places into this new world, flooded in sunlight, shackled in a frost of minus fifty, encircled with the apparitions of aim Far Eastern birch-trees rising to the very heavens.

Thus we came to the town of Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur.

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not yet been published (save for a fragment that appeared in 1972 under the anodyne title *Scenes from the Far East*). Till 1943 he was a labourer on construction sites at various camps in the area of Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur; for part of the time he worked in the draughtsman's office, which, given the harsh conditions of outdoor work, "probably helped to save his life." His health however, was permanently undermined when in 1943 he was transferred to work on soda-extraction in the Central Asian steppe: he died eventually of a second heart attack (not, as Western accounts have it, of tuberculosis) in consequence.

A strange episode from Zabolotsky's camp existence was first given currency by Ivanov-Razumnik (who himself emigrated after having been imprisoned), and repeated by B. Filippov in the introduction to an American edition of Zabolotsky's poetry published in 1965. According to this account the poet managed to smuggle a letter to Nikolay Tikhonov (see Note 1), whom the NKVD had named (with the novelist Konstantin Fedin in Moscow) as leader of the supposed "terrorist organization" for "membership" of which Zabolotsky and others had been convicted. With pointed irony the letter congratulated Tikhonov and Fedin not only on still being at liberty, but on having

ing recently been awarded high State honours, while rank-and-file members of their "organization" languished in prison; it went on to suggest that since there were certain inconsistencies in the situation they should either admit their guilt and request to be imprisoned themselves, or take steps to have their "underlings" set free. Ivanov-Razumnik's story is not entirely true as told, but does have some factual basis; such a letter was written, not to Tikhonov, but to the Writers' Union. Characteristically Zabolotsky never gave up his obstinate desire to make the authorities admit that he was wrongly convicted, and kept petitioning the leadership of the Writers' Union to that effect; there was little they could do to curtail his sentence, but the stubborn campaign probably paid off to the extent that Zabolotsky was released fairly soon after his five-year sentence had expired (on August 18, 1944), though compelled to remain in exile for some time longer.

Only two poems date from the period of his imprisonment: one composed during the train journey through Siberia, one the next year. In the difficult conditions of exile he began to work again, on a project he had already considered in the 1930s; a translation into modern Russian verse of the twelfth-century masterpiece *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*.

By Idris Parry

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Goethe was not much good at writing plays. He was essentially a lyricist. One of the characteristics of his *Faust* is that it seems at first to be a succession of monologues. This professor who knows everything and understands nothing is talking about himself and his situation, but talking not only in his own name but also through characters who appear to be separate. Do we really believe any author has the power, to possess completely the mind and memory of another person? It seems hardly necessary to say that fictional characters are not real people, yet critics still try to find out how many children had Lady Macbeth.

Even Mephistopheles is a subjective reflection. "To think," said Hofmannsthal, "that the heavens and hells of all religions are made out of the human mind. It all depends on the power of projection." This projector is form given to feeling, and the form projected as *Faust* is confusing because irregular by Aristotelian standards. The present book by John Gearey is an attempt to explain these irregularities by reference to Goethe's changing moods and activities over the long period during which the play, or poem, was written.

This attempt has been made before. Explanations have been sought ever since *Faust, ein Fragment* was published in 1790 and troubled many readers by its apparent shapelessness. And the idea of explaining form in Goethe through parallel study of the life is scarcely new. Goethe's well-known acknowledgment of his work as "fragments of a great confession" has been taken as a direct invitation to critics to relate the fragments to the subjective creator. *Faust*, written over a period of sixty years from Goethe's young manhood to old age, "the main business" as he called it, must seem the perfect vehicle for this kind of comparison.

Barker Fairley (*A Study of Goethe*, 1947) outlined the terms of the pursuit: "If the life and works are so closely involved in each other as Goethe made them, out to be, there must be a way of involving

This apparently so impressed the local authorities in Karaganda that they petitioned for him to be allowed to return to Moscow to complete work on it; he managed to do so in 1946, though still living in considerable difficulties. Finally, on October 6, 1951, his conviction was officially quashed at the instance of the Writers' Union and in particular of Aleksandr Fadeyev, its powerful General Secretary, who had been deeply impressed by Zabolotsky in a long conversation that had followed a chance meeting at Peredelkino in 1946). A footnote to Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Hope Abandoned* suggests that "the poetry he published in the late Stalin years shows the price he had to pay for this 'pardon'", but the implications of this are unacceptable, since from 1949 to late 1953 no original poetry by him was printed at all, and the small number of poems which had appeared in the couple of years before that included half a dozen of his finest works. Uninterested in fame or fortune, unwaveringly convinced of his mission, Zabolotsky lived frugally on the proceeds of translation-work, and only from 1956 — in the year in which he wrote "The Story of My Imprisonment" — were there unmistakable signs of the public recognition that has been growing ever since.

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Faust as form

both in our interpretation and of making them support one another in a fuller understanding of him." Professor Gearey follows exactly this course, not necessarily to extend our understanding of Goethe but certainly to extend our understanding of the form of *Faust*. He too pursues Goethe's inner biography, what Fairley calls "the account of what went on in his mind in its progress from immaturity to maturity".

Gearey depends heavily on Fairley's *Goethe's Faust: Six Essays*, 1953, and Eudo C. Munson's memorable book *Goethe's Faust: Its Genesis and Purport*, 1967. He is more subjective than either of these authors; his book could almost be taken as yet another Faustian monologue. The form here reveals a lot about the writer's enthusiasm for his subject. He wants to tell those who are ignorant of German literature about the greatness of this work. He believes, rightly, that readers outside Germany or German studies must be supplied with the kind of background information which is naturally available to people acquainted with German culture. He works from *Faust* in English translation, using Anna Swawick's version, first published in 1930. So this book is not intended for Goethe scholars, though no doubt many would be stimulated to argument by what is essentially a personal discussion based on detailed knowledge of the text and secondary sources.

Yet there is some confusion of approach in this book. The author tells us that "since the purpose of this study is to provide an apology for *Faust* as a masterpiece of world literature, a knowledge of the original . . . could not automatically be assumed." The knowledge that can't be assumed goes a little way beyond this. A footnote to the title *Faust*, for instance, explains that "Ur" means original. Another note directs the reader to *The Oxford Companion to German Literature* for a definition of the terms "romantic" and "classic" as they apply to German literature. Details of literary history are spelled out with elemental simplicity: "The year 1775 marked the move to Weimar and the assumption of responsibilities at the court . . ." and so on.

There is nothing wrong about giving this information. It is necessary to know these things before we can begin to understand *Faust*. Such details have their place in what may be a series of lectures given to a class of eager students pursuing a course of comparative literature in translation and perhaps not yet knowing enough about literature to make any com-

parison. Everyone has to start somewhere. What is confusing is that the same book can refer its readers, in footnotes, to works available only in the German language — scholarly studies of *Faust* and the Artemis edition of Goethe, for instance. This approach seems to be on a different plane. So do the many pages of generalizations which might mean something to a person already acquainted with the texts from which the generalizations are drawn but are not likely to make much impression on a student who has had to be told the meaning of "Ur". These generalizations make one recall with satisfaction the clear language of Barker Fairley and Munson on the same subject. The particular may be beyond the reach of words, but that is no reason for talking about *Faust* for 56 pages before deciding that "It is to its actual beginnings we must now turn".

Goethe's own attitude to form was ambiguous. With all his respect for tradition he could still say that every form, even the most deeply felt, has something untrue about it. That sense of change which is the most essential element in his philosophy, because the most natural, could of course accommodate no other belief, and this belief brings him to our doorstep. His doubt is a confession that the concept of form is basically an apology for our limitations, and structure is to be accepted as flow and therefore elusive to word and classification. The diversity of form in *Faust* illustrates what Goethe means when he says that form is a burning-glass which gathers and concentrates the "broad rays of nature for human perception. Our sense of form may be faulty, but it is our only approach to understanding.

Dolf Sternberger's latest volumes of essays, *Schriften III*, (422pp. 3 458 04932 0), and *Schriften IV*, (322pp. 3 458 04832 4), both published by Insel Verlag, will reward anybody interested in political ideas, and delight those who appreciate good German. Sternberger's capacity and appetite for debate are as infectious when he talks about Aristotle or Aquinas as when Burke and Paine, Lesslie and Marx, Weber and Carl Schmitt are called to the bar. From the same stable as Arendt, he captures the difference between them in a few essays: she was "too bold to be wise". He himself is wise as few Germans have been on the future of the bourgeois and of parliament, the conflicts between representation and democracy, or the meaning and value of politics as such. But he does not veil what is peculiarly German in his work.

D. J.

Mother

Stone age men were as peaceful as gorillas grazing on herbs or leaves and when they died re-entoring the wombs of their mothers into the earth, under their mounds. Woman wove our fate, their looms were fire-side stars. Then came the ages of bronze, of iron, the solar heroes Lugh and Apollo who like eagles could look at the sun without blinking and death was no fall into an underworld womb but an ascent into Heaven, a transformation to angels.

I watch my mother and think of this history as she squats in her council flat like Aeneas knitting my scarf, complaining she hasn't seen me. Mothers are our light whilst they wear pretty dresses which we can just remember. Then they become old things afraid of death, of everything, nodding to sleep by gas fires, our most egotistic selves reflected in the graduation photos on their dressers.

My scarf of fate's now long enough, the needles fall limp in her big-knuckled hands. She thinks graves are old-fashioned: no tomb and cross for her, no marble vases, poets in any case are liars. "Cremation's the modern way", box, bones and all disappearing into solar fires.

Glyn Hughes

